



## ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER'S OFFICE NSW

Uncertainty continues for EDO following a review of legal assistance services announced by the NSW Attorney General. New guidelines indicate that state funding is not to be used for lobbying activities, public campaigning, and legal advice to activists and lobby groups. It is to be for legal advice and representation for socially and economically disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

*The Australian* reported that these changes follow months of mining industry pressure on government to "de-fang" EDO. Most EDO work is to protect the environment on behalf of rural community groups, farmers, Aboriginal groups, and rural and regional communities. These groups surely come within the definition of disadvantaged and vulnerable. EDO will receive \$110,000 less of Public Purpose Trust funding this financial year, and the future of this funding, (over two-thirds of its annual budget) is uncertain. Despite the cuts, EDO is committed to maintaining its high standard advice on environmental legal questions and developments in environmental and planning law. It appears that 2013 is shaping up as a defining year for EDO and generally for planning and the environment.

## WARRAGAMBA DAM FIELD DAY - 1<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER

Five people braved the weather forecast of searing 40c heat for the trip to Warragamba dam. On arrival, we were surprised to find that, despite advice to the contrary, access to the dam wall was permitted. We proceeded down onto the dam wall, where we observed swimming wildlife in the dam waters (possibly native water rats). Then we went down onto the "garden terraces". After inspecting the wall from below, we climbed back up to the cool air-conditioning of the visitors centre, and examined its very informative exhibits. Afterwards we found a very comfortable picnic table and shelter for lunch, and later retired to the Wallacia pub for much needed refreshment.

## SMIGGINS TRIP JANUARY 12-19<sup>TH</sup>

A great time was had by the 20 of us. It was wonderfully cool throughout. Sunday 13th had rain and fog, but most were happy just being there, and enjoyed the rest day. Walks included the Lakes Walk circuit taking in Kosciuszko Summit and Seaman's Hut, Mount Stillwell, Bobs Ridge trail to Cascade Hut, Rainbow Lake, Waterfall walk, Watson's Crags, Porcupine Rocks, Palaibo Track, Charlottes Pass Boardwalk and a section of the Summit Walkway from Thredbo top station. Drives and Picnics covered Lake Eucumbene/Buckenderra, the Alpine Way to Tom Groggin, Khancoban, and Cabramurra. We dined at a number of popular spots - Alpine Air, an open-air café between Perisher and Charlotte's Pass, Indian in Jindabyne (before a platypus spotting evening along the Barry Way), Iona Café at Dalgety, Guthega Alpine Inn, Eagles Nest Thredbo, and a farewell lunch on Friday afternoon at Wild Brumby Distillery. [Report by Robin Dickson]

## RAISING WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

The Colong Foundation notes that the recommendation of *Infrastructure NSW* to raise the dam wall by 23m is unnecessary and environmentally damaging. Installing new floodgates and improved flood monitoring would provide substantial flood mitigation and save the \$500 million estimated cost of raising the wall. In addition, there would be no protection against extreme floods (average one in 500 years) even if the dam were enlarged. [www.colongwilderness.org.au/](http://www.colongwilderness.org.au/)

## DEATH OF KEITH UNDERWOOD

We were saddened to hear of the death of Keith Underwood. Many of us remember him as an active and involved member of OFF. He was Hon Secretary of our Society from 1988 to 1993.

## OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA LOGO

Tim James' striking design of a magpie's head superimposed on a flannel flower, a common and iconic plant in Oatley Park, has been selected as the logo. We are in the process of incorporating versions of the logo on our website, letterhead and OFF News. The trial above, for the News, is for consideration, and comments welcome.

## SERIOUS DRAINING OF AQUIFERS

However much we waste and abuse water, we assume that the rains will refill the rivers and reservoirs, except during droughts. *The National Geographic* notes that while it may be true for water at the surface, it is not so underground.

Subterranean water is stored by nature in the pores of rocks, often for thousands of years. The world is becoming increasingly dependent on it, and over-use can cause major problems. The most evident is a lowering of the water table beyond the reach of existing wells that must be deepened to reach the groundwater. In some places, the water table has consequently dropped by hundreds of feet.

In parts of India, groundwater levels have dropped 10 meters since 1979, and the depletion is accelerating, emptying the giant natural reservoirs far faster than the rains can refill them. About a quarter of India's food is irrigated with underground water and it is running out.

India is but one example; the crisis is global and growing fast, but remaining largely out of sight and mind.

[news.nationalgeographic.com/news/](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/)

## ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD FOR ALAN FAIRLEY

OFF nominated Alan for an Environment Award in the 2012 National Volunteer Awards program, recognising his outstanding contribution to protecting the environment and educating the public about its importance.

The nomination was successful and on 5<sup>th</sup> December, Alan was presented with the award by Daryl Melham, Federal Member for Banks, at a ceremony in Revesby.



## OATLEY PARK FLOWERS IN JANUARY

*Black She oak*

Erect tree with pine-like leaves and 6-8 leaf-teeth in a whorl around the stem joints. Male and female flowers different. Female inflorescences (pictured here) small, red and scattered along stems. Female flowers form distinctive cylindrical woody cones. Widespread and common.

*Allocasuarina littoralis*



See Alan Fairley's whole list at <http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=1821>

## COMING EVENTS

**Feb 4<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm. The Annual General Meeting** with the election of officers and review of the work of the Society. If you are interested in nominating for the committee, please contact **Liz Cameron**. If you have interesting photos please bring them for a "PowerPoint presentation", [sorry no slides, must be digital photos on CD or memory stick, (up to 18 photos!)]. The meeting will close with a social supper - please bring a plate.

**Feb 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with **Dr Dieter Hochuli**, Associate Professor at Sydney University School of Biological Sciences, talking on *Urban Ecology in a Changing World*.

**Mar 2<sup>nd</sup> (Sat) Field Day to Michael Mobb's Sustainable House** - leader **Graham Lalchere**. [Details later]

**Mar 3<sup>rd</sup> (Sun) Clean Up Australia Day** - [Details later]

**Mar 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with **Dr Peter Mitchell**, one of Australia's leading environmental scientists, talking on *Traces of the Ice Age in Sydney*.

**April 6<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field Day** to the upper Georges River bushland corridor - Platypus and Koala Country. Destinations are an old convict road (called the Old Ford Rd) that traversed from Campbelltown to the Coast, and the Basin, a river and creek junction on the upper Georges River. **Leader Sharyn Cullis**.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY OF OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA CONSERVATION SOC INC. FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31/12/2012. Leslie Wylie Hon Treasurer

Credit Balance at 31/12/2011	\$6,932.72		
From 1/1/2012		Receipts	Payments
Subscriptions		\$3,550.00	
Donations		\$1,299.00	
Sale - Plants		\$87.00	
Annual Dinner		\$1,520.00	
Annual Dinner Raffle		\$200.00	
Sale - OFF Caps		\$10.00	
Rockdale Council- Birds in Backyards		\$678.00	
Meeting Stall Sales		\$56.00	
Interest		\$1.37	
Annual Dinner deposit refund		\$199.00	
<b>Total Receipts 31/12/12</b>		<b>\$7,600.37</b>	
Department of Fair Trading			\$49.00
Birds in Backyards costs			\$600.00
Printing/Postage			\$765.61
Australia Post Box Rental			\$93.00
Printing Programs			\$266.20
Annual Dinner			\$1,724.00
Insurance			\$749.52
NCC Membership			\$200.00
Donations (see Note)			\$1,900.00
Lions Oatley Festival Stall			\$120.00
O.F.F Gazebo Awning			\$49.00
Oatley Logo Design			\$500.00
Oatley Uniting Church Hall Hire			\$399.60
Sundries			\$146.70
<b>Total payments 31/12/12</b>			<b>\$7,562.63</b>
Credit balance 31/12/2012		\$6,970.46	
Add Term Deposit A/c		\$9,907.56	
<b>Total Society Funds</b>		<b>\$16,878.02</b>	

**Note: Donations.** (\$500) Environment Defenders Office, (\$300) Colong Foundation, (\$200) WIRES, Kuringai Bats, Wilderness Society, Total Environment Centre, Blue Mountains Conservation Society, (\$100) Sydney Wildlife.

The Society's funds at 31/12/12 were \$16,878.02 including \$543 in the President's Fund for donations to other environmental bodies. Included in the Society's funds are 2013 Subscriptions in advance of \$1500. Generous donations of \$834 were received in Nov/Dec with 2013 subscriptions to go into the President's Fund. Thank you.

## OUR TREASURER STEPPING DOWN

Leslie Wylie is stepping down as Hon Treasurer. Many thanks for your seven years of splendid work Leslie.

## BIRD BROCHURE APPEAL

OFF Committee has approved the printing of a coloured bird brochure to depict the birds of Oatley Park and Lime Kiln Bay. The first step is to raise funds for set up and printing costs. An appeal is being made for donations. If you would like to help this worthy cause, please indicate that your donation is for the bird brochure. Our target is \$2500.

## MYLES DUNPHY STREAMWATCH

This is a regular testing program by volunteers of the creek lines flowing through to the Georges River. The Group next gathers at 9am on Tuesday 26th Feb. For more detail ring Sharyn (9579 1262) or Heather (0425 291 879).

## MANAGEMENT OF MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE

A draft plan will be on exhibition until Monday 18th Feb at Hurstville Civic Centre, and Hurstville City Library during normal opening hours. A public meeting where residents and other stakeholders can discuss the draft plan will be held on 11th Feb at 7pm. There is much more detail to be found at [www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/).

## NO HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS!

If you agree that hunting in national parks creates dangers and will hardly help remove animal predators, there are some suggestions about how to make your views known to our parliamentarians.

<http://nohunting.wildwalks.com/>



## FOR NOTING

**Australian Plant Society** NSW Regional Meeting 16<sup>TH</sup> Feb 1pm with Maria Hitchcock sharing tips on growing Waratahs and Flannels Flowers. [menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au](http://menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au)

**Clean Up Australia Day** is on Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Its website is at [www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/](http://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/). O.F.F will be organising an event at a site to be announced.

**Mulga Road Books** 89 Mulga Rd Oatley W is operated by Rotary Hurstville and has a wide range of quality second hand books. <http://rotaricap.com/mrb/>.

**Oatley Heritage & Historical Society** has quarterly meetings to report on current research. These are held on the last Friday of Feb, May, Aug, and Nov at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL. [www.oatleyheritagegroup.com](http://www.oatleyheritagegroup.com)

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2013

Have you paid your membership fee yet? The fee is \$25 per family. One way to pay is by direct bank transfer to BSB 062 206 Act no 901997 Oatley Flora and Fauna Con Soc, AND **put your name on the transfer form.**



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 4<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY

Congratulations to Graham Lalchere elected President, to our elected committee members, and congratulations and thanks to Julian Sheen for his splendid leadership in his six years as President.

### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Julian Sheen in his presidential address reviewed the strengths of O.F.F. and the challenges it is, and will be facing. He questioned:

1. What keeps OFF strong?
  - Sustaining our values based on *conservation*: the abiding belief that we should live in harmony with nature.
  - Credibility and integrity: We are not ratbags who jump on the latest Green bandwagon. We are critical and careful – and committed.
  - Confidence that Oatley is not just another burb. Oatley offers joys that are not found everywhere, that require protection.
  - Membership: Our membership, sustained at about 300, is based on our members seeing us as relevant to their lives and lifestyles.
2. What challenges does OFF face?
  - The national and global challenges and pressures of living out of harmony with nature.
  - Locally: The “Big House” syndrome or McMansion ethic that says you must build the biggest house and cram it full of stuff.
  - Urban consolidation: While this leads to smaller housing, which is a good thing, trees and habitat are lost as blocks are completely cleared.
  - Local Council attitudes: While attitudes have changed since the old, “kerbing and guttering” days of the 70s, Councils are often out of harmony with nature. This requires vigilance.
  - Retaining our relevance. Many a Bowling Club and Progress Association, having been sure of their relevance, now find themselves disbanded. We should never assume we would not suffer the same fate. Our changing demographic may challenge our relevance; we must be adaptable while holding strong to our core values.

I pass on the president's position to safe hands, confident in the sustained relevance of Oatley Flora and Fauna, and I look forward to our centenary, 42 years away. [Julian Sheen]

### SECRETARY'S REPORT

Alan Fairley's service to OFF has been recognised by a National Volunteer Award.

Membership averaged 295, including 15 new members. Former members who died during the year included June and Keith Underwood (who both served terms as Secretary), Sylvia Keech, Grahame Pepper, Joan Nicholson, Muriel Harding, Betty Blacker and Jim Griffiths. Twelve field outings had an average of 12 participants. Most popular were whale watching in Royal NP with Alan Fairley and a night walk to see geckos in Lime Kiln Bay, led by Matthew Mo.

Our monthly meetings attracted an average audience of 47. Thanks to Rodger Robertson and Cliff Crane of for their last minute stand in for the scheduled speaker in August. The biggest attendances were for talks on Biodiversity Corridors, Aboriginal Art, and Sustainable Urban Home Designs

Julian Sheen gave interviews regularly on radio 2NBC FM to publicise meetings.

Forty people attended the Annual Dinner organised by Alison Gilroy and Sue Howard. Guests wore eye-catching hats and Trevor Revis entertained with well-chosen songs. \$200 raised by the raffle was donated to the Environmental Defender's Office. The Annual Picnic in Oatley Park was held in fine weather, and attracted a loyal crowd.

We ran stalls at Oatley Lions Festival, Oatley Scouts Market Day and, for the first time, Cross Currents River Festival at Georges Hall. Environmental book prizes were again presented to a student each at Oatley and Oatley West Public Schools.

Other activities included a week at Smiggin Holes in January, attended by 16. In September members joined Harry Whaite's family to scatter his and Olive's ashes on the peak in the Blue Mountains named after Harry.

Eleven entertaining issues of the newsletter were produced by John Davoren. 40 percent of members receive a posted copy, the remainder accessed it online at OFF's website. Melina Amerasinghe enhanced the website with brief illustrated news bytes linked to longer articles; highlighting specific items and encouraging feedback.

We lobbied Hurstville Council to better care for local wetlands and worked towards improving the health of Georges River. Graham Lalchere supervised our Clean Up Australia Day site in Gannon's Park and we sought political support for a national deposit-refund on beverage containers. We lodged objections to removal of significant native trees proposed in building applications and attended a meeting of Hurstville Council's Tree Management Working Party. Kogarah Council's solicitor briefed us on the EPA Act on tree preservation and we resolved when it is necessary to protect trees, to seek on expert advice.

We made submissions on Heathcote Ridge Development, Gannons Park Landscape Masterplan, NSW Planning and Infrastructure's New Planning System, NSW Review of Hazard Reduction Program, HCC Local Environment Plan, Coalpac Consolidation Project, and the Dharawal NP Plan of Management. We wrote letters on the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill and Shooting in National Parks, and we are campaigning to re-name Oatley Park as Oatley Bushland Park, a suggestion from Lesley Cox. At the Oatley Lions Festival, we collected signatures in support, and we will present our case to the new Hurstville Council.

Alan Fairley initiated the production of a colour brochure on the birds of Oatley Park, and funds are being sought.

OFF has a new logo incorporating a magpie and a flannel flower, designed by Tim James. It appeared on the first issue of OFF News for 2013.

We co-operated with groups including NPA Southern Sydney, Oatley Heritage & Historical Society, Menai Wildflower Group and Friends of Royal NP and disbursed \$1,700 from The President's Fund to eight conservation organisations.

My thanks to committee members for their support and advice, and to all members of O.F.F. for their commitment to the conservation of our natural environment. [Elizabeth Cameron]

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## COMING EVENTS

**Feb 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with Dr Dieter Hochuli, Associate Professor at Sydney University School of Biological Sciences, talking on *Urban Ecology in a Changing World*.

**Mar 2<sup>nd</sup> (Sat) Field Day touring Michael Mobb's Sustainable House** 58 Myrtle St Chippendale. Fee \$5 pp. Catch the 8.43am train from Oatley to Redfern. The tour is from 9.30 to 10.30 am, after which Michael will give us information on the surrounding road gardens with over 1,000 fruit trees, herbs, and edible plants in 12 blocks. We will then do a self-guided tour of these streets, so bring hat, sunscreen and water. We should be finished between 12 and 1 pm, and then go off for coffee.

**Leader: Graham Lalchere** T 0430 968 260 or 9580 3107.

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CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY - MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup>

Help us clean up on *Clean Up Australia Day*. The OFF site will be in Poulton Park, meeting on the corner of Morsehead Drive, South Hurstville. Kogarah Council will provide a BBQ for volunteers from 1pm.

Come along anytime between 8-30am and 1pm. Bring gloves, sunglasses, sunscreen, and please wear sturdy shoes. [www.cleanupaustriaday.org.au/](http://www.cleanupaustriaday.org.au/)

## SEWAGE IN THE GEORGES RIVER

Sydney Water crews were in Oatley after recent heavy rainfall caused two sewage overflows in Myles Dunphy Reserve and Lime Kiln Bay.

Brian Shaw, chairman of the Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance, noted that it was at least the fifth overflow in the area in 12 months. Increasing urban densities and new suburbs have generated massive increases in the sewage load dumped into this area. It appears that problems arise because of the age and condition of the sewerage system. Sydney Water spent \$65m on lining the North Georges River sub main, but the rest of the system needs urgent work, particularly to reduce ingress and illegal connections of stormwater. Significant innovative solutions are needed to cope with the overloaded system, and to prevent discharges into the Georges River tributaries, including those around Oatley.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAWS

Under pressure from big business and the mining industry, federal and state governments have recently announced an aggressive plan to wind back essential environmental protection laws. This plan would remove essential federal protection for threatened species and accelerate mining and coal seam gas development in forests, and rural areas. The federal government must not abandon its environmental responsibilities and the NSW government must restore balance, integrity, and legitimacy into the NSW planning process. We need an improved regime for assessing major public infrastructure, with early engagement and input from local communities, to improve the decision-making process and community acceptance of proposals. [nccnsw.org.au/campaigns/](http://nccnsw.org.au/campaigns/)

## MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE

OFF has submitted comments to Hurstville Council on the draft Plan of Management for the Reserve and Wetland. The chief concern is on the effect that any developments at the site of the former Oatley Bowling Club would have on the integrity of the Myles Dunphy Reserve. In O.F.F.'s view the Reserve is compromised by the exclusion of the site from the Plan. Recorded history makes it clear that the site is indeed part of the Reserve, yet its exclusion is based on an assumption that it is not part, and/or that it is not relevant in maintaining the health of the Reserve.

This assumption is called into question with the comment on page 140 of the Plan that "any redevelopment of the bowling site must not be to the detriment of the rest of the Reserve". However, because of its exclusion, the Plan has no role in ensuring that any site developments will not harm the Reserve, when, in view of the proposals mooted, detriment is virtually unavoidable. The 204 page draft plan is available on Council's website. [www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/)

**O.F.F.'S PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR IS POSTED THIS MONTH TO ALL MEMBERS, AND THIS NEWSLETTER IS POSTED WITH IT. THE USUAL REMINDER E-MAIL MESSAGE TO MEMBERS TO LOOK FOR IT ON THE INTERNET WILL NOT BE SENT. THE LATEST EDITION WILL BE ON THE WEBSITE FROM THE THIRD MONDAY OF EACH MONTH.**

## WILDERNESS SOCIETY: JAMES PRICE POINT

The Wilderness Society (WS) will join with Goolarabooloo Traditional Custodian, Richard Hunter, in taking the West Australian Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the Environment Minister to Court over the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas hub at James Price Point, in the Kimberley region. The Department of State Development and EPA support the project, covering an area 20 times the size of the Melbourne CBD. In July last year, the EPA released its Report recommending approval with some conditions. However, the Report was suddenly finalised and approved by the EPA Chair acting alone. The highly controversial 'one-man decision' ignored apparent conflicts of interest, and triggered public outcry with some 1800 public submissions lodged in less than a week. WS is of the view that this case will make a significant contribution to the community campaign against environmental devastation, and that, if successful, the WA Government will have to re-examine its environmental assessment process dramatically. WS seeks our financial help. See much more at [www.wilderness.org.au/](http://www.wilderness.org.au/)

## BIRD BROCHURE APPEAL FOR \$2500

If you would like to help this worthy cause, please indicate that your donation is for the bird brochure.

## MYLES DUNPHY STREAMWATCH

This is a regular testing program by volunteers of the creek lines flowing through to the Georges River. The Group next gathers at 9am on Tuesday 26th Feb. For more detail ring Sharyn (9579 1262) or Heather (0425 291 879).

## FOR NOTING

**Human Dependence On Nature - How To Help Solve The Environmental Crisis**, a book by Haydn Washington Published by Routledge RRP \$40.95

**March Blooms in Oatley Park** are listed and illustrated on our website [off.oatleypark.com/](http://off.oatleypark.com/)

**Menai Wildflower Group Meeting** 13<sup>th</sup> March - Guest speaker Greg Jackson- "Delardes Reserve, Illawong". Menai community markets 17<sup>th</sup> Mar. [menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au](http://menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au)

**Oatley Heritage & Historical Society** has quarterly meetings to report on current research. They are held on the last Friday of Feb, May, Aug, and Nov at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL. [www.oatleyheritagegroup.com](http://www.oatleyheritagegroup.com)





## CUTS IN WATER EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

SMH [24<sup>th</sup> Feb] reported that Sydney Water has abandoned a decade-long push for Sydneysiders to cut their water usage, and described the decision as short-sighted, designed to preserve corporate profits, to maximise government dividends and to make desalination appear viable.

With the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest water consumption per household in Australia, Sydney cannot afford to abandon water efficiency programs. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) notes that Sydney Water's spending on efficiency programs has fallen from \$30.5 million five years ago to \$1.5 million last year. "The dramatic cuts are short-sighted," said NCC Chief Executive Officer, Mr Pepe Clarke. "Water efficiency programs have driven substantial reductions in water consumption, but Sydney's water consumption is still high compared to other capital cities. In its national performance report, the National Water Commission found that Sydney Water customers were second only to Melbourne as highest users of water per household". [nccnsw.org.au/media/](http://nccnsw.org.au/media/)

This regrettable decision surely calls for a strong community response to work to retain, improve and spread water saving practices. Reducing water over-use in washing, showering, and on paths and cars is important. We must not assume that, as the drought has ended, there is no need to conserve water. We must help reduce the demand on water infra-structure and need for more dams.

## COAL SEAM GAS

The debate about CSG continues as a battle of economy against environment, with little room for compromise on either side. The main public health issue is the potential chemical water contamination which could seriously affect human health decades after exposure. Health impacts may arise from the use of fracking chemicals or from the release of hydrocarbons and other contaminants from the coal seams. There are indications that high recorded levels of fugitive methane may be contributing to illness in local communities. Adequate assessment and regulation are key measures, and contamination prevention is the goal. As with lead and asbestos, adequate assessment and regulation are key measures. However, the gas industry refuses to disclose what chemicals are actually used in fracking, claims that their procedures use only benign substances, and opposes reasonable regulation. [health risks of gas](http://health.risks.of.gas)

## CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT MINING RULES

Both the federal and the state government are seeking reasonable regulation, and are enacting new powers over coal seam gas mining. The results could be useful in sifting out the riskier, more marginal mining and fracking projects, but only time will tell how effective these moves will be. NCC stresses that the new rules must apply retrospectively to projects already under way. [www.reuters.com/](http://www.reuters.com/) <http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/>

## THE GEORGES RIVER (GR)

There are increasing levels of serious sewage pollution of the GR and its tributaries. Minister Greg Pearce's announced [allocation](#) of \$16 million for the Cooks River will certainly enhance the amenity of that area, but it does not address the whole problem. The GR Coastal Zone Management Plan has as its primary goal to conserve and improve the existing natural environment of the GR and the water quality through targeted pollution reduction. The draft plan is on public exhibition for comment until 12<sup>th</sup> April. You can see it at [georgesriver.org.au/Estuary](http://georgesriver.org.au/Estuary). *State and local government intervention is urgently needed –please have your say!*

## WARRAGAMBA DAM

The Colong Foundation notes that in 1995, after a highly successful three-year community-based campaign, the Labor Government rejected a plan to raise Warragamba Dam by 36 metres. Instead, an auxiliary spillway was built to address serious safety issues affecting the dam. Now a second proposal seeking to raise the dam wall by 23m has come forward, virtually identical to the expensive, damaging and simplistic scheme that was rejected in 1995.

<https://www.colongwilderness.org.au/dont-raise-dam> <http://us5.campaign-archive1.com/>

## ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE

EDO has been granted \$1.2 million in funding for the financial year 2013-14. However, support has been reduced by about 27%, so it is facing a substantial shortfall. Public support is urgently needed if EDO is to continue to provide legal advice and representation to community members to use the law to protect the environment.

Go to <http://edo.org.au/edonsw/site/donation.ph> for more information on the Environmental Defence Fund EDO NSW, Level 5, 263 Clarence Street Sydney NSW 2000.

## TREE TRIMMING AND POWER LINES

O.F.F. has expressed concern over extreme lopping of street trees around power lines in the Hurstville and Kogarah areas. Recently the lopping has been drastic, unsightly, and potentially tree harmful; see Gungah Bay Rd. Ausgrid, the body responsible for lopping, states that its program to keep trees clear of power lines complies with the law designed to prevent injury to people and damage to property. It notes that the vegetation safety clearance is typically 1.5m around overhead bare, low voltage wires.

Ausgrid offers Councils the option of installing *Aerial Bundled Cable* (ABC), wrapping the low voltage wires into one single insulated cable to protect trees. The safety clearances required for ABC are less than for uninsulated wire, but it is a moderately expensive option. Apparently the Councils must bear the cost, and are reluctant to do so. O.F.F. is appealing for Ausgrid (or the Councils) to apply the ABC tree protective option more broadly. [www.ausgrid.com.au/](http://www.ausgrid.com.au/)

## TOURISM IN NATIONAL PARKS

Peter Prineas is author of the book [Wild Places](#), and a long term contributor to environmental conservation in Australia, an activist, writer and lawyer, beginning with campaigns to save Lake Pedder and the Boyd Plateau. He has spoken at several National Wilderness Conferences, and at a recent meeting of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS), on tourism development in national parks and its effect on nature conservation. The primary purpose of the national park system is nature conservation, with a secondary purpose of providing for recreation compatible with nature conservation. For him, tourism development is the issue, not the visitors, and the threat to parks from inappropriate tourist development is as much a cause for concern as allowing shooters in parks. [www.bluemountains.org.au/](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/)

## BEN BULLEN STATE FOREST

This [Forest](#) is the western gateway to the Gardens of Stone. The Office of Environment and Heritage has noted the Forest as suitable for reservation under the National Parks and Wildlife Act of NSW. **BMCS** is urging people to write or e-mail the appropriate authorities calling for and supporting this reservation. Let us join them! [www.bluemountains.org.au/](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/)

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2013

Have you paid your membership fee yet? The fee is \$25 per family. <http://off.oatleypark.com>

## COMING EVENTS

**Mar 23<sup>rd</sup> (Sat) Earth Hour 2013** 8.30 to 9.30 pm <http://earthhour.org.au/>

**Mar 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with **Dr Peter Mitchell**, one of our leading environmental scientists, talking on *Traces of the Ice Age in Sydney*.

**April 6<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field Day to the Upper Georges River.** Participants proceed along the M5 to the Campbelltown Rd exit, go for 2km, and then turn left into Rose Payten Drive. Follow this road, with several name changes, for around 3km to the 'T' intersection. Turn left on to Georges River Rd, and go for another 4km, to meet at the turning circle. The drive from Oatley should take around an hour, to meet at 9.30am. There are 2 short walks of about 5.5km altogether. The first is a gradual descent to an old convict road; the other is down good but steep stairs to a lovely swimming spot called the Basin. Bring lunch and the usual walk requirements. Whilst we can linger at the Basin, there are other options that we can decide about on the day. **Leader: Sharyn Cullis.**

**April 22<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with **Neil Saintilan** speaking on **Coastal Mangrove, Saltmarsh and Climate Change**. Dr Saintilan is Principal Research Scientist and Head of the Rivers and Wetlands Unit in the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

**April 27<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field Day to Oatley - Como Bridge Walk.** **Leader Graham Austin**

**April 28<sup>th</sup> (Sun) Field Day to Mt Annan Native Botanic Gardens.** **Leader Alison Gilroy**

## O.F.F. ON CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 2013

28 people (including 7 children) helped clean up the Poulton Park environs on Sunday morning. There were 11 Bags of recyclables and 20 of rubbish collected. It seemed a similar amount to that collected a few years ago, when OFF last cleaned Poulton Park. [Report by Alison Gilroy]



## URBAN ECOLOGY IN A CHANGING WORLD

Associate Professor Dieter Hochuli of Sydney University's School of Biological Sciences spoke on this theme at our last meeting. Research in Sydney's bushland remnants is focussing on the effects on biodiversity of habitat fragmentation, most likely caused by encroaching urban development. He described urbanisation as an extreme and rapidly growing human pressure on the natural world, leading to substantial fragmentation of areas of natural habitat, effecting biodiversity and ecological processes. He noted by way of example that the balance of insect habitat is changing, and many insect-eating small birds are not commonly seen in the areas where they once thrived. An increase in leaf-eating caterpillars, and effects on flora seem related to this change. He commended bush regeneration and suitably planted gardens to augment bushland remnants. He also commended helping urban children connect with nature, watching ants rather than video games. Clearly understanding our changing ecosystems is vital if we are to maintain overall sustainability, and we need to change our expectations of remnant urban bushlands. As we cannot maintain them in their pristine condition, we must maintain them as best we can, appreciate what we have, and not just lament what we have lost. [sydney.edu.au/science/biology/](http://sydney.edu.au/science/biology/)

## MICHAEL MOBB'S SUSTAINABLE HOUSE

For the O.F.F. field day on Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> March some 20 people, under overcast conditions, caught the nominated train. As we alighted at Redfern the heavens opened and the wind picked up; but it soon eased, and we had an easy stroll to Chippendale. We passed some lovely old buildings with beautiful brickwork and decorative finishes, and two magnificent native trees, a great example for other councils. Arriving at Michael's house we ended up with a total of 38 participants signing in and paying the \$5 entrance fee. Michael explained in detail how he had made his house sustainable. It is not connected to town water and sewerage (treated in his back-yard); it uses solar electricity and hot water with only a small amount of town gas for cooking (the most efficient method). He grows food in his tiny back-yard and keeps 2 chooks.

Michael was only too happy to answer our many questions. He sold copies of his books, *Sustainable House* and *Sustainable Food*, the latter now available for loan at meetings. Later we had a quick look at the surrounding streets with community plantings of edible and ornamental plants, compost bins and even a lending library in an old esky. It was a most informative and enjoyable morning. [Report

by Graham Lalchere] [www.abc.net.au/science/planet/house/special.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/science/planet/house/special.htm)

## VALE JIM DOUGLAS

Sadly we have lost another of our valued members. Dr Jim Douglas died on 21<sup>st</sup> February. He was a committed member of OFF for 28 years. Our sincere sympathy is extended to Jim and Alma's family. There are some interesting details about Jim at [www.maths.unsw.edu.au/](http://www.maths.unsw.edu.au/)

## BIRD BROCHURE APPEAL

Production of the colour brochure of *Birds of Oatley Park and Lime Kiln Bay* is progressing; the style has been decided and the text completed. All 62 photos have been obtained from 3 different sources. A special thanks to Edwin Vella and Peter Hayler for their generous contributions of high quality photos, including some of species difficult to photograph. Also thanks to those who made donations to produce the brochure. We are waiting now for possible additional funding from Hurstville City Council. [Alan Fairley]

## MARCH BLOOMS IN OATLEY PARK

The Sharp Greenhood (*Pterostylis acuminata*) is a ground orchid, with stem to 24cm tall and a solitary flower, 25mm long, translucent green and distinguished by 2 long erect pointed lateral sepals. Mostly it flowers in April-May, but has been spotted in early March on the Headland Track. Alan's whole



list for March can be found at <http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=1910>

## FOR NOTING

**Annual General Meetings** a) BMCS 730pm Wed 27<sup>th</sup> March at the Conservation Hut. b) Colong Foundation 2pm Mon 29<sup>th</sup> April at 2/332 Pitt St.

**Draft Georges River Estuary Coastal Zone Management Plan** is on public exhibition ending on 12<sup>th</sup> April [www.georgesriver.org.au/](http://www.georgesriver.org.au/)

**Myles Dunphy Streamwatch:** Volunteers testing the creek lines flowing to the Georges River meet 9am on Tues 26<sup>th</sup> March. Detail: Sharyn (9579 1262), Heather (0425 291 879).

**Mulga Road Books** 89 Mulga Rd Oatley W is operated by Rotary Hurstville and has a wide range of quality second hand books. <http://retarcap.com/mrb/>.

**Oatley Heritage & Historical Society's** meetings to report on current research will be on 24<sup>th</sup> May, regarding the history of the Oatley Bowling Club, and on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug, and 29<sup>th</sup> Nov at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL. [www.oatleyheritagegroup.com](http://www.oatleyheritagegroup.com)

**O.F.F. 2013 program** is now available. If you did not receive one in the mail, please ask for it at the next meeting or download it from <http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=2389>





## THE FIRST NATIONAL PARK

In its February newsletter the National Parks Association [NPA] noted that, although denied by many, the world's first gazetted national park was Australian, in Sutherland Shire, before Yellowstone USA. In 1972 the Yellowstone Library and Museum Association produced a commemorative book entitled *Yellowstone: A Centenary of the Wilderness Idea*. This notes that "the first time the [title] national park was used in the body of a public act was in the establishment of the National Park\* near Sydney, Australia in 1879. The first legislative reference to Yellowstone as a national park occurred in 1883". <http://branches.npansw.org.au/> (\*Renamed The Royal National Park in 1954 after the Queen's visit.)

## LESS CONCERN ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

A NSW environmental survey in 2012 indicated less community concern about the environment than there had been in earlier surveys. Health, education and transport rated as higher priorities, while environment and environmental issues were nominated by only 6% as a current priority, down from 11% in 2009. While 14% rated environment as a priority for attention in 10 years' time, this compares to an earlier 23%. The changes in attitude are apparently related to the decline in prominence of water issues, and far less mention of climate change. The research indicated that the ongoing confusing debate over environmental issues makes it too hard for many to engage in bigger-picture issues, resulting in greater focus on matters closer to home, and less on protecting the environment. [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/)

## EARTH HOUR 2013

Earth Hour is a simple idea that has quickly turned into a global phenomenon. On Sat March 23<sup>rd</sup>, hundreds of millions turned off their lights for one hour across the globe to show their commitment to creating a more sustainable planet. At 8:30pm, they turned off lights, televisions, computers, and other devices. Although scheduled to run only for one hour, many took it upon themselves to continue long into the night. <http://theenergycollective.com/> <http://files.earthhour.org.au/2013/>

In Toronto Canada, that country's largest electricity company recorded a 205 megawatt reduction during the event, a 7% drop from regular load at that time, equivalent to taking 92,000 homes off the grid. In British Columbia, residents saved 1.95% of their electric load, and in our Hunter Valley, Ausgrid, the electricity distributor, reported a 1.5% energy reduction. In Sydney the figures were not readily available, but the Opera House did turn green for the occasion.



Sceptics do not appreciate the global symbolic nature of the event, and sneer at the level of electricity saved, as if that were the primary objective. Some people walking round our local area were disappointed to see so many houses not taking part, with all their lights, and even outside lights on, perhaps as sign of a negative reaction!

## O.F.F MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2013

Have you paid your membership fee yet?

The fee is \$25 per family. One way to pay is by direct bank transfer to 062 206 901997 Oatley Flora and Fauna Con Soc, but if you do so, you must put your name on the transfer form.

## MORE BUSHFIRES

Ken Thompson, formerly deputy commissioner of the NSW Fire Brigade commented in the SMH [5<sup>th</sup> April] on the huge bushfires now occurring every summer in south-eastern Australia. "Wet winters - and we look set to have one again this year - create an explosion in tree growth that the arid summer dries out. This leaves a ready and enormous supply of fuel for the flames to feed off, and increases the odds for bushfires to occur. No one wants to see another Black Saturday, but all the evidence suggests that without action, that is exactly what will happen. The work of our climate scientists and the Climate Commission is valuable, but fire-fighters need detailed, regularly updated information. Long-term bushfire weather forecasts every two years would help us prepare for the inevitable consequences. We need to make sure that climate change gets no worse, and we are better prepared to cope with potentially devastating fires".

## AROUND THE WARRAGAMBA DAM

The Colong Foundation notes that were the dam wall to be raised by the proposed 23m there would be significant negative results. Upstream, the World Heritage Wilderness and National Parks would all be damaged, and downstream so would the protected Kowmung, Cox's and Nattai Rivers. Flood inundation would scar wilderness areas, killing river bank vegetation and depositing sediment.

The false sense of security created by raising the dam wall would encourage the further release of low lying land where development is currently prohibited. Up to 100,000 houses could be constructed with the detrimental effects of:-

- X Dramatic increase in vehicle movements per day in the Hawkesbury-Nepean valley, leading to congestion, air pollution and health problems throughout western Sydney;
- X Huge increase in run-off and sewage discharge with further deterioration of water quality;
- X Loss of rich agricultural land to urban expansion and destruction of fisheries, and the oyster farming industry. <https://www.colongwilderness.org.au/dont-raise-dam>

## COAL SEAM GAS [CSG]: CONTINUING DEBATE

*Four Corners* looked at the CSG issue on April 1<sup>st</sup>. It noted that the industry is promoting itself as a cleaner carbon-fuel alternative, but that much of the information to back this claim comes from the industry itself, and does not always square with experience on the ground. A reporter talked to farmers who have seen rivers bubble with methane, their bore water polluted with chemicals, and reserves of ground water on their property dropping alarmingly. [www.abc.net.au/4corners/](http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/) Australia is in the middle of a huge gas boom with around \$180 billion being spent on infrastructure, but long term damage to the environment is still not being properly addressed. The recent Community Forum at Springwood highlighted many matters of concern, and called for greater community participation to help achieve reasonable restrictions on CSG development. <http://www.stopcsghm.net.au/> As EDO notes, if CSG activities continue without restriction, the potential for conflicts over land use, and negative environmental, social and economic impacts is greatly increased. [www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site](http://www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site)

## THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE

EDO NSW still needs our support to continue to provide legal advice to the community, to seek improvements to environmental laws, and to provide community legal education in publications and workshops. <http://edo.org.au/edonsw/>

## COMING EVENTS

**April 22<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with Neil Saintilan speaking on **Coastal Mangrove, Saltmarsh and Climate Change**. Dr Saintilan is Principal Research Scientist and Head of the Rivers and Wetlands Unit in the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

**April 27<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field Day to Oatley - Como Bridge Walk**. Meet at 10am at the south end of Myra Place, at the beginning of the walkway. It is a walk specially designed for those "who no longer do bush walks". The tour should take about an hour with free discussion to follow. Bring water and food; coffee shops are available. **Leader: Graham Austin** T 9579 2375. [www.railtrails.org.au](http://www.railtrails.org.au)

**April 28<sup>th</sup> (Sun) Field Day to Mt Annan Native Botanic Gardens**. Drive is up to 45 minutes from Oatley, down the M5 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Campbelltown exit, to route 9 (Mt Annan Gardens signposted in a big brown sign). Take the right fork towards Campbelltown/Narellan along Narellan Rd. Turn left at the 2<sup>nd</sup> set of traffic lights into the gardens. Meet at entrance to the car park near the visitors centre at 10.30 am. We will be doing a 3 km circuit walk of about 1 hour, (Central Valley Walk) leaving near the visitors centre. Then we will tour by car, stopping at various gardens highlighting specific families of plants, and stop at one of these for lunch. Bring lunch, water, hat, and sunscreen. **Leader: Alison Gilroy** T 9580 5557. [www.rbgsvd.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rbgsvd.nsw.gov.au)

**May 27<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with Graham Fry speaking on **Reducing Energy Use in the Home - Save Money and the Environment**.

**June 1<sup>st</sup> (Sat) Field day amble from Lugarno to Peakhurst**. Amble Leaders: Jan Douglas & David Crawford- T 9533 2187.

**June 24<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with Gary Schoer speaking on **Shackleton's Subantarctic Voyage**.

## TRACES OF THE ICE AGE

At our March meeting, Dr Peter Mitchell, one of Australia's leading environmental scientists, gave an illustrated talk on how Botany Bay has changed over the last 30,000 years, with an emphasis on human occupation since the last ice age. He spoke on indications of sea level change, and its likely effect on the earliest occupants of Sydney's coast - the Aborigines. He discussed the studies of the earliest work on Aboriginal sites in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, through to the present archaeological work on remnants of the apparently once extensive middens. His information was delivered clearly, with excellent slides supporting his conclusions, some of which - through his own admission - still considered controversial amongst his peers. Arguments that Aboriginal fishing practice may have been influenced by early Polynesian visitors; and that the sea reached 2m above present levels not so very long ago, were among the ideas giving us food for thought.

Note also Peter's role in [finding Bennelong](#) [SMH 27/03/2011]

## FIELD TRIP: UPPER GEORGES RIVER

It was a beautiful rain washed morning on Sat 6<sup>th</sup> April when nine of us gathered in the bush behind Campbelltown. Threatening clouds cleared and fortunately the rain stayed away. Walking along the tracks there were many flowers out, including lambertia, several types of banksia, epacris, and early wattle. Initially we ambled down an historic road, built in the 1880's, that is now listed on the NSW State Heritage Inventory. There was evidence of old dynamite works from initial construction, and lovely old sandstone flagging in culverts and dish drains. In one magnificent grey gum, a koala was spotted enjoying the morning sun. The Koala colony in the upper Georges River bushland is a particular research interest of the University of Western Sydney, and thought to be one of the healthiest and largest so close to Sydney. After we had morning tea on the banks of the upper reaches of the Georges River, we walked up the slope, and then back down a steeper trail with 230 stairs to another part of the Georges River gorge further upstream. This was a magnificent water hole, called The Basin, with cascades over a wonderful rock platform. Several people swam there, and we had lunch basking on the rocks. We weren't lucky enough to spot any elusive platypii. Their presence was confirmed in this vicinity in 2011 when one was found drowned, entangled in thick fishing lines. On a more positive note, there have been live sightings since then. [third-platypus-sighting-this-month-at-kentlrv](#) [Report by Walk Leader Sharyn Cullis]

## MAY BLOOMS IN OATLEY PARK

Sweet-scented Wattle (*Acacia suaveolens*) is early flowering, commencing in April and lasting until November. It is widespread and common. For the whole list of May blooms go to <http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=2032>.



## MORE EFFECTIVE RECYCLING

The Total Environment Centre [TEC] welcomed *Waste Less, Recycle More*, the NSW Government's recently announced five-year \$465.7 million waste and resource recovery initiative. "There's no doubt the refocussing of the large waste levy revenues on new infrastructure to collect organics and remove hazardous products from contaminating kerbside recycling will help towards more effective recycling", said Jeff Angel, Executive Director TEC. He goes on to make the case, as does [Greenpeace](#), that a 10 cent refund is needed to get cans and bottles returned to drop-off points. "We'll need fully effective and viable drop-offs and collection programs to get this stuff out of kerbside."

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au) <http://www.tec.org.au/> <https://www.greenpeace.org.au/action/?cid=38>

## BIRD BROCHURE

Production of the colour brochure of *Birds of Oatley Park and Lime Kiln Bay* is progressing; the style has been decided and the text completed. [off.oatleypark.com/fauna.html](http://off.oatleypark.com/fauna.html)

Hurstville City Council has agreed to make a substantial contribution to the brochure. Thank you Council, and all others who have donated.

## FOR NOTING

**Kimberley Updates** from the Wilderness Society - awe-inspiring videos made about the Kimberley, its pristine nature and why it should be protected. <https://secure.wilderness.org.au/>

**Myles Dunphy Streamwatch**: Volunteers testing the creek lines flowing to the Georges River meet 9am on Tues 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Detail: Sharyn (9579 1262), Heather (0425 291 879).

**National Trust Community Milestones** 18<sup>th</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> May: celebrating heritage across the State to entertain, inspire and inform us all. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/>

**Oatley Heritage & Historical Society's** next meeting will be on 24<sup>th</sup> May, beginning at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL, with Graham Lalchere speaking on the history of the Oatley Bowling Club. [www.oatleyheritagegroup.com](http://www.oatleyheritagegroup.com)

**World Environment Day** June 5<sup>th</sup> is one of the principal means by which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment, calling for political attention and action.

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/world-environment-day](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/world-environment-day)





## OATLEY PARK

Oatley Park is a tree-covered peninsula almost surrounded by the estuarine waters of the lower Georges River. Viewed from a distance, it rises from the water as a steep bushy prominence. Covering an area of 45 hectares, it is the most significant area of bushland remaining in the St George district. Its importance as a sanctuary for native flora and fauna is increased because it is linked by bush corridors around Lime Kiln Bay to narrow but substantial reserves fringing South Peakhurst and Lugarno.



The park is not completely natural. It has roads, an oval, picnic areas and historic tidal swimming baths. It is subject to intensive recreational uses, especially at weekends and in summer holidays when hundreds of visitors picnic, cycle and walk throughout the park. Nevertheless, there remain some significant natural areas protecting a wide range of native plants many of which are locally endangered or are regionally extinct.

The park's natural values cannot be taken for granted. The flora is under threat from excessive hazard-reduction burning, from too many recreational visitors, and from park maintenance by inexperienced workers.

The future of the park depends on community concern, awareness that this is a valuable asset, and management by the Trustees with expertise and foresight. [See more at <http://off.oatleypark.com/flora.html>]

## OATLEY BIRD SIGHTINGS - APRIL 2013

8pm. A pair of Powerful Owls call from a gully in Moore Reserve after being absent since last year's breeding season. Hopefully the pair will breed again this year.

A pair of King Parrots is already examining a hole in a tree at Moore Reserve, months before the normal breeding season. The female bird spent half an hour at the hollow with the male perched at the entrance keeping up a continuous array of sounds as if encouraging its mate.

A Caspian Tern in winter plumage was seen fishing off Websters Lookout, Oatley Park.

A pair of Musk Lorikeets investigated a tree hollow in Oatley Memorial Park. If this pair was to nest, it would be a first record of breeding in Oatley. Although often seen in Oatley and throughout Sydney, these parrots rarely breed in the suburbs.

Migrating Yellow-faced Honeyeaters have been passing through Oatley all autumn. Flocks of up to 50 birds were noted at Hills Peak in Oatley Park with hundreds of birds flying towards Lugarno. These flocks include an occasional White-naped Honeyeater, a bird once common in much of Sydney but hardly seen nowadays in built-up areas. [Report by David Waterhouse]



## BLOOMS IN OATLEY PARK IN JUNE

Black-eyed Susan (*Tetratheca neglecta*) is small shrub with whorled leaves; flowers pink with four petals and a dark centre, found on the plateau near the lookout but uncommon. More on the website at: [off.oatleypark.com/?p=1131](http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=1131)



## BIRD BROCHURE

The coloured brochure *Birds of Oatley Park* is now at the printer. We thank Hurstville City Council for their contribution towards printing costs. Barring unforeseen holdups, we intend to give a copy to each person attending the next OFF meeting on May 27<sup>th</sup>.

## KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK AT RISK

The Colong Foundation notes the view of some scientists that the Park is at risk because of increased use, climate change, introduced plants and animals, and it's being developed and sold. A real estate bonanza is planned that will see the park damaged and apartments sold for a quick profit.

Global warming increases impacts. Kosciuszko's snowline has been rising for over 50 years. The ski resorts want increased artificial snow, continued experimental cloud seeding without environmental assessment; and more summer commercial recreation that would turn Kosciuszko into a private amusement park. High impact users are demanding more access to fragile park areas. Four wheel drive, trail bike and horse riding groups are pushing for more fragile parkland to be put aside for their use. Without effective management and adequate funding, pigs, goats and wild horses will trample sensitive landscapes, pollute streams, displace native animals and spread weeds through the park. [www.colongwilderness.org.au/campaigns/](http://www.colongwilderness.org.au/campaigns/)

## MORE FREEWAYS?



Governments are seeking to build more freeways. Sydney's [WestConnex](http://www.westconnex.com.au/) project is a good example. The plan is to extend the M4 and M5 costing somewhere between \$10 and \$12b.

The case seems impressive, yet there is telling evidence worldwide that, in the longer term, freeways increase overall road use and congestion. To reduce congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and related problems, it is argued that the better environmental and economic option is to improve road and transport efficiency, not just build more roads. [new-freeways-cure-congestion-time-to-put-the-myth-to-bed-13896](http://new-freeways-cure-congestion-time-to-put-the-myth-to-bed-13896)

## BIRDLIFE POWERFUL OWL SURVEY

It is on again in the Sydney Basin. There are a number of pairs resident along the estuarine Georges River and, if you are interested in the survey, please contact David Bain, Powerful Owl Project Officer, at the Birdlife Australia Discovery Centre T96471875, [david.bain@birdlife.org.au](mailto:david.bain@birdlife.org.au). If you have evidence of Powerful Owls in the St. George area please contact Chris Lloyd at [Pezoporus@bigpond](mailto:Pezoporus@bigpond). Any sightings/hearings with a date and location are useful but even better if you note what the bird was up to.

## MINING ACTIVITY

The Wilderness Society notes that mineral exploration in Australia increased by 34% in just 12 months between July 2011 and June 2012 and that the total expenditure on oil and gas exploration rose by almost 50% between 2007 and 2011. The projects included nine new mines across the Cape York Peninsula, oil and gas mining off the Arnhem Land coastline, open-cut tin mining in Tasmania's Tarkine region, oil drilling in the Great Australian Bight and coal interest in the Great Artesian Basin. [www.wilderness.org.au/](http://www.wilderness.org.au/)

## COMING EVENTS

**May 27<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Graham Fry speaking on Reducing Energy Use in the Home.** In recent years the cost of electricity and gas has increased substantially, causing financial hardship to some people in our community. This talk by a former energy adviser will be on how we can save energy in the home which in turn will save money and reduce our impact on the environment. Topics discussed will include lighting, heating, hot water and solar power.

**June 1<sup>st</sup> (Sat) Field Day Walk in Peakhurst and Lugarno** in four reserves (Jinna Reserve, Gannons Park, Heinrich Reserve and Evatt Park) and local streets. Meet at 9.15am in Jinna Reserve at the intersection of Pamela Ave and Jinna Rd, Peakhurst for an 8.5 km walk looking at local plants, weeds and history on a mixture of rough and smooth tracks and footpaths/ nature strips. About 5.5km is in reserves. Wear sturdy shoes, bring a hat, morning tea, lunch and water as we won't pass any shops or cafes. We expect to be back at our starting point by 3.30pm, depending on the time spent on lunch and discussion of plants and history. **Leaders: Jan Douglas and David Crawford** T 9533 2187 or 0431 712 191.

**June 24<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Gary Schoer speaking on Shackleton's Subantarctic Voyage.**

**June 29<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day to Curracurrong Royal National Park, Whale watching. Leader: Alan Fairley- 9570 8332**

**July 22<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Sharyn Cullis and Phil Andersen speaking on Travels through Three National Parks in Patagonia**

**July 27<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day to Thirlmere Lakes. Leader: Graham Fry - 9580 6621**

## COASTAL MANGROVE AND SALTMARSH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Dr Neil Saintilan spoke on this topic at the April 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Neil is Principal Research Scientist and Head of the Rivers and Wetlands Unit in the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, and his research interests focus on the ecology of freshwater and saline wetlands, and their response to climate change. Neil's passion for this subject began as a young boy playing in the mud in Gungah Bay, Oatley.

He noted that coastal saltmarsh has been listed as an endangered ecological community in NSW, when recent research points to its importance as a source of nutrition for fish, a feeding habitat for microbats, and a roosting habitat for several species of migratory shorebirds.

It is reputed that saltmarsh is 10 times more efficient at sequestering atmospheric carbon than rainforest, an important reason alone to convince governments around the world to commit to preserving and extending saltmarsh areas.

Since European colonisation, coastal saltmarsh has been reclaimed for agricultural, residential and industrial use. Over the past five decades there has been a consistent replacement of saltmarsh by mangroves. Reasons for this change might be shading of saltmarsh by successive mangrove expansion. Mangroves are favoured over saltmarsh by the many ways in which we have changed the environment of estuaries, with higher sediment and nutrient loads, sea-level rise and higher temperatures (mangroves are tropical plants and saltmarshes mainly temperate).

Research highlights the importance of allowing for the landward retreat of saltmarsh as sea-levels rise. With a future featuring global warming and sea level rise, saltmarsh may just increase its domain if tidal barriers are kept out of the equation.

COMO BRIDGE WALK: 27<sup>th</sup> APRIL

A group of twenty met at the commemorative plaque and, led by Graham Austin, enjoyed the bridge walk and reflections on the history of the track opened on 15<sup>th</sup> Dec 1985. The three in the photo were on the committee that battled over six years for the walkway over the old bridge, unused since 1973, and over which trains first travelled on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 1885. [off.oatleypark.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/oatley-como-walkway](http://off.oatleypark.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/oatley-como-walkway)



## DIGITAL COPY OF O.F.F. NEWS

There are advantages in reading the newsletter on the internet. It is usually available on the Tuesday before our monthly meeting, with an e-mail reminder if you want it. You can read it in colour format, download it, print it or send it on. You then save postage costs for the Society, and have instant access to the precise places in the websites mentioned. You can remove your name from the mailing list by contacting Robin on 9580 5663 or Liz at [lizc@pacific.net.au](mailto:lizc@pacific.net.au)

FIELD TRIP TO MT ANNAN: APRIL 28<sup>th</sup>

Mt Annan, established in 1988, is the largest botanic garden in Australia. Situated on former farmland, it contains remnant Cumberland Plain Woodland, a critically endangered ecological community of the region. It showcases Australian flora amongst its rolling hills and lakes, and with abundant native animal and birdlife, picnic areas, barbecues, lakeside lawns, walking and cycling tracks it is a popular recreational destination. [www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/)

The field day was magnificent, clear, and more reminiscent of summer than autumn. Eighteen people, including two children, met at the visitors centre. We first did the inner area walking circuit, taking in district views, and inspecting arboretums of fig trees, Wollemi pine groves, and various sculptures including the human sundial. Some even made the small excursion to Summit Mt Annan. Lunch was partaken on the lush lawns, by the lake filled with waterlilies and ducks. We then piled into cars, and drove to three of the feature gardens, viz the *Big Idea Garden*, the *Wattle Garden* and the *Banksia Garden*. [Report by the leader, Alison Gilroy]

## FOR NOTING

**A** Guide to Private Conservation in NSW available free to the community from EDO. [email EDO](mailto:EDO) or T 9262 6989.

**K** imberley Updates from the Wilderness Society - awe-inspiring videos made about the Kimberley, its pristine nature and why it should be protected. <https://secure.wilderness.org.au/>

**M** yles Dunphy Streamwatch: testing the creek lines flowing to the Georges River meets 9am on Tues 28<sup>th</sup> May. Detail: Sharyn (9579 1262), Heather (0425 291 879).

**O** atley Heritage & Historical Society's next meeting will be on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May, beginning at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL, with Graham Lalchere speaking on the history of the Oatley Bowling Club. [www.oatleyheritagegroup.com](http://www.oatleyheritagegroup.com)

**W** orld Environment Day 2013 Concert June 5<sup>th</sup> 7pm Independent Theatre North Sydney, an evening of music celebrating the beauty of nature, and mourning senseless destruction. [theindependent.org.au/ticket\\_store/so\\_performance/100612394](http://theindependent.org.au/ticket_store/so_performance/100612394) [www.timeanddate.com/holidays/au/world-environment-day](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/au/world-environment-day)

**FORGOTTEN YOUR OFF MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2013?**

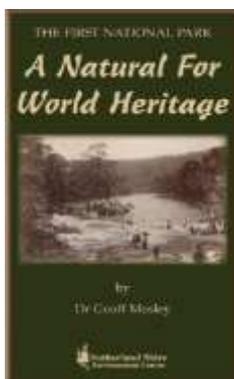


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## NATIONAL PARKS

Geoff Mosley argues in this book that national parks are the world's best known and most important conservation measure, but that of all the 962 places on the World Heritage List not one has been selected to commemorate their development. The gap would be filled if the Royal and Heathcote National Parks and the Garawarra State Conservation Area were nominated for the World Heritage List, and so accepted for their internationally significant cultural and natural heritage values. [Promotional](#)



[pamphlet www.firstnationalpark.org.au/](#)

A feature of this book is the way in which it illustrates how the national parks, developed from urban parks, set aside as lungs for growing cities, evolved to focus on intensive recreation nature conservation. The RNP [dedicated April 1879] contributed to the spread of national parks and diversification of their management in New South Wales and elsewhere. Its legacy includes parks in the Blue Mountains, Snowy Mountains and other wilderness areas.

[australia.gov.au/about-australia/](http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/)

## CHALLENGES FOR THE GEORGES RIVER AREA

Formerly the Tucoerah River, it was an important focal point for Aboriginal life and culture. Renamed the Georges River by Governor Philip, it is some 96 kms in length, flowing from near Appin, north, past Campbelltown, Glenfield, and Liverpool, and then east to Botany Bay. The catchment area (the land that drains into the river) covers some 960km<sup>2</sup>. With over a million people it is one of the most highly urbanised catchments in Australia.



Looking east from Oatley Bay to the Pacific Ocean

Developments caused serious ecological and aesthetic damage, resulting from poor or no urban planning, from storm water, sewerage pollution, flooding and loss of flora and fauna. [off.oatleypark.com/](http://off.oatleypark.com/) [www.environment.gov.au/](http://www.environment.gov.au/)

The [GRCCC](#) is one body doing great work to enhance the health of the river system, but faced with inadequate and deteriorating infrastructure, and the high costs associated with improving it, the tasks ahead are very challenging.

## DON'T LEAVE IT TO EXPERTS!

Under this puzzling heading the U.S. Environmental Agency declared, "To be effective, a citizen organisation must be credible. It must know what it is talking about. It must know how to discriminate between accurate and inaccurate information. It must not accept as gospel whatever uninformed individuals might say. Get the facts! Check your sources! If someone claims that technology does not yet exist to deal with a particular problem, or that it's too costly to install, check it, and help the public [and perhaps the uninformed!]. In doubt, seek outside guidance." In OFF News Nov 1973

## THE FUTURE OF NATIONAL PARKS

Keith Muir, director of the *Colong Foundation for Wilderness* points out that the only way for the NSW Government to avoid a high-profile public shaming is to reject all the recommendations of the recently released Public Lands Inquiry Report. Noting that Sydney is to host the World Parks Congress in November 2014, an important event held only once every decade, he argues that the congress delegates must pour scorn on the NSW Government for failing to defend national parks from attack by the Shooters and Fishers Party. The Public Lands Inquiry, chaired by Shooter Robert Brown MLC, seeks to destroy the long-standing political consensus over the management of national parks, wilderness areas and nature reserves. The first recommendation of the Shooters' Inquiry pushes for multiple use of all public lands. The Shooters' proposal would turn national parks into grazing lands, logging areas, mines and tourist resorts.

[www.colongwilderness.org.au/media-releases/](http://www.colongwilderness.org.au/media-releases/) [www.birdlife.org.au/media/protect-the-places-we-love/](http://www.birdlife.org.au/media/protect-the-places-we-love/)

## AUSTRALIA'S CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT

With over 60 presenters and 30 workshop topics, the event will be at Sydney Secondary College, Taylor St, Glebe on Sat-Sun 22-3<sup>rd</sup> June. [climatesummit.org.au/](http://climatesummit.org.au/)



## MORE ON LOGGING

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW has renewed its call for an end to unsustainable native forest logging and a rapid transition to plantation sources of timber after it was revealed that the NSW Forestry Corporation lost almost \$8 million on its native forestry operations last financial year. The *Sun Herald* reported that taxpayers paid \$671 a hectare subsidising the loss-making native forests operations of the corporation. "It is absurd that the people of NSW are paying millions of dollars each year to prop up an industry that is destroying thousands of hectares of wildlife habitat every year and yet does not enjoy public support," Its CEO, Pepe Clarke said. "The environmental arguments against logging of native forests are already well established. These figures now demonstrate a clear economic case for ending unsustainable native forest logging and accelerating the transition to a more sustainable plantation based industry." <http://nccnsw.org.au/media/>

## DID YOU KNOW?

Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens were established in 1816 by Governor Macquarie and are regarded as the oldest scientific institution in Australia. A number of trees in the Gardens in 1816 are still living, and the renowned Herbarium contains over one million preserved plant specimens, some collected by Sir Joseph Banks.

## FUNDING COMMUNITY ENERGY

Right across Australia local communities are working hard to set up community-owned renewable energy projects to power their towns and buildings, and are seeking financial assistance to achieve this. The Coalition for Community Energy is calling for a \$50 million government grant.

[www.fundcommunityenergy.org](http://www.fundcommunityenergy.org)

## COMING EVENTS

**June 24<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Gary Schoer speaking on In the footsteps of Shackleton: An Antarctic adventure to South Georgia, Elephant Island and the Antarctic Peninsula.** Gary will share some images from his fourth expedition to Antarctica and try to convey how Shackleton and his fellow explorers coped with the Southern Ocean when their ship, Endurance, failed to live up to its name as it was crushed by the ice. [Searching For Shackleton by Gary Schoer](#)

**June 29<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day walking from Wattamolla to Curracurrong (Eagle Rock).** Turn at the RNP sign at Loftus; follow Audley Rd to Sir Bertram Stevens Dr, then to Wattamolla Rd. The walk will be approximately 7km return, mostly easy with 70m ascent. Last year we walked north from Wattamolla; this year we will head south along the Coast Track with cliff edge viewing for migratory whales. Bring lunch and drinking water. Meet at 10am at upper car park, Wattamolla (near toilets). In case of rain or if in need of a spare seat in car, ring leader **Alan Fairley** ☎ 9570 8332 (up to 8.30am on the day).

**July 22<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Sharyn Cullis and Phil Andersen speaking on Travels through Three National Parks in Patagonia.**

**July 27<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day to Thirlmere Lakes. Leader: Graham Fry** ☎ 9580 6621

**Aug 26<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Alan Fairley speaking on Exploring the Galapagos Islands**

**Aug 31<sup>st</sup> (Sat) Field day to Muogamarra Nature Reserve** between Cowan, and the Hawkesbury River.

**Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Dave Kirshner, "Goanna Man", speaking on Monitor Lizards.**

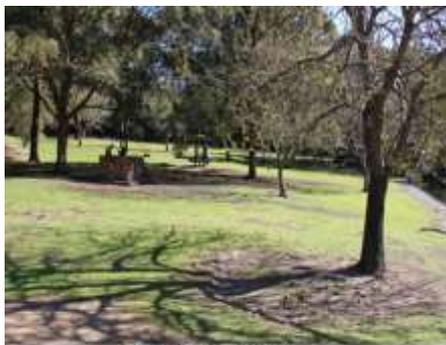
SAVE MONEY AND THE ENVIRONMENT May 27<sup>th</sup>

Forty four members and guests gathered for fellow OFF member, Graham Fry's illuminating presentation on how to save energy use in the home. This is important because, as well as saving money on energy costs, it reduces our impact on the environment - something we should always be trying to do. Graham showed some of the greatest savings result from replacing electric with solar hot water systems. At his house this measure reduced his electricity use by 40%. Other tips were replacing halogen lights with compact fluorescents or the newer [LED](#) lamps (which are both very efficient and have a long life). He showed how the replacement of halogen lighting by LED lighting could pay for itself in 14 months. He reminded the audience that insulation in the ceiling substantially reduces heating and cooling requirements, and closing curtains and blinds can also reduce heating and cooling costs.

WALK IN PEAKHURST AND LUGARNO June 1<sup>st</sup>

Eighteen OFF members and friends enjoyed mild weather with only a sprinkle of rain towards the end of our 8 ½ km walk, which included four reserves in Peakhurst and Lugarno (Jinna Reserve, Gannons Park, Heinrich Reserve and Evatt Park) and local streets. A few steep hills were testing for some of us, but the very moderate pace helped.

Optional checklists of plants and birds provided a prompt to look a little harder at our surroundings, and the new OFF bird brochure helped in identifying ducks on Webbs Dam. We lunched in Evatt



Evatt Park Lugarno

Park which was an orchard from the 1880s, a market garden until about 1960, and much earlier, the site of an unusual volcanic intrusion called a [diatreme](#).

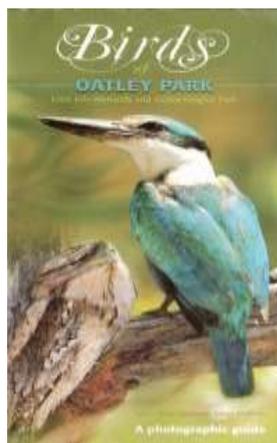
The difference between areas where Bushcare is active and other bushland areas shows that more funding is needed for bush protection and regeneration. We shared information about the early years of European settlement in the area, including land grants, family businesses, local industries and social change. We also saw and heard evidence of the continuing loss of large native trees from our local area. Though most of us were very close to home, almost everyone visited unfamiliar locations and learned something about how the landscape has changed, and about some of the people who lived there. Perhaps the walk is a reminder that we don't have to travel far to visit new and interesting places. [Report by co-leader Jan Douglas] [sites.google.com/site/lugarnohistory](http://sites.google.com/site/lugarnohistory)

YOU CAN ENJOY ACCESSING O.F.F. NEWS ON THE INTERNET, AND SAVE POSTAGE COSTS FOR THE SOCIETY.

## O.F.F.'S NEW BIRD BROCHURE

107 bird species have been recorded in the area in recent years. Some are attracted by flowering gums, others by the estuarine flats, the ponds and reed beds of the wetlands. Cockatoos, king parrots and rosellas nest in hollows of large trees. Raptors are often seen overhead and ospreys are known to nest nearby. This area of significant bushland, with bush corridors linking nearby reserves is an important sanctuary for resident and migratory birds, many of which are featured in the brochure.

[The brochure is funded by Hurstville City Council and OFF members]



## FOR NOTING

**A** Aboriginal History in Royal National Park & Surrounds at Kurnell Visitors Centre, Cape Solander Dr, Sun 21<sup>st</sup> July 2-6pm. RSVP by 21<sup>st</sup> July to Margaret Philips ☎ 9542 0648 or [mailto:xyz@xxx.org.au](mailto:mailto:xyz@xxx.org.au)

**A** Australian Museum's Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2012 Exhibition, 8 June to 7 Oct. [www.australianmuseum.net.au/](http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/)

**E** arth Masters: Playing God with the Climate Author Clive Hamilton investigates the risks of some of the measures being proposed to save the planet. [www.clivehamilton.com/](http://www.clivehamilton.com/) <http://off.oatleypark.com/>

**L** ugarno History Riverside Reflections: Memoirs of Lugarno, by Glenyss Barnham, and Ferries and Farms: A History of Lugarno by Graham Blewett.

**M** yles Dunphy Streamwatch, testing the creek lines flowing to the Georges River next meets 9am on Tues 25<sup>th</sup> June. Details: Sharyn (☎9579 1262), Heather (☎ 0425 291 879).

**N** ew Planning System for NSW - White Paper See comments by Environmental Defenders Office NSW [www.edo.org.au/](http://www.edo.org.au/)

**T** otal Environment Centre is addressing climate change, green energy, natural areas waste and recycling [www.tec.org.au/home.html](http://www.tec.org.au/home.html)





**A GREENER PLANET**

The *New Scientist* reports that our planet is getting lush, and we are responsible. Carbon dioxide generated by human activity is stimulating photosynthesis and causing a beneficial greening of the Earth's surface. For the first time, researchers claim to have shown that the increase in plant cover is due to this "CO<sub>2</sub> fertilisation effect". However, it remains unclear whether the effect can counter negative consequences of global warming, such as the spread of deserts. Recent satellite studies have shown that the planet is [harbouring more vegetation](#) overall, but identifying the cause is difficult. Higher temperatures, extra rainfall, and an increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> could all be boosting vegetation. [www.newscientist.com/](http://www.newscientist.com/)

**THREATENED FLORA AND FAUNA**

Australia is estimated to be home to more than 500,000 animal and plant species, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. Over the last 200 years, more than 100 animal and plant species have become extinct. In fact, more mammals have died out in Australia than in any other continent. In NSW, there are more than 850 animal and plant species at risk of extinction, including the [koala](#), [humpback whale](#) and [Wollemi pine](#). Our ecological systems and some populations of plants and animals are also threatened.

There are numerous threats to our native plants and animals in NSW and more broadly across Australia. Loss of habitat, weeds and feral animals, pollution, disease and climate change all play a role. The NSW Government is working with local communities, farmers, landowners and community groups on local and large scale projects to help reduce these threats, restore habitats and populations of threatened species. <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/>

**BIOSECURITY STRATEGY**

Biosecurity is the protection of the economy, environment and community from negative impacts associated with pests, diseases and weeds. The NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021 was launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. The Strategy is based on the principle of shared responsibility and has been prepared to increase awareness about biosecurity issues and provide a framework for biosecurity management. It identifies key goals, and strategies to manage risks effectively. [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-strategy](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-strategy)

**VIEW OF THE STARS**

Once a source of wonder, the star-filled nights are vanishing in a yellow haze. The light of cities, as pictured, mars our view of the stars. [The International Dark-Sky Association](#) (IDA) notes that the obscuring of stellar lighting threatens astronomy, ecosystems, and [human circadian rhythms](#); and the lighting energy so wasted costs billions of dollars per year. IDA's mission is to preserve and protect the night-time environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting. [www.darksky.org/about-ida](http://www.darksky.org/about-ida)



**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PARKS**

Australia has over 500 national parks. Over 28 million hectares of land is designated national parkland, accounting for almost 4% of Australia's land. A further 6% is protected including state forests, nature parks, and



Blue Lake, Kosciuszko NP

conservation reserves. National parks are usually large areas of land protected because they have unspoilt landscapes and a diverse number of native plants and animals. This means that commercial activities such as farming are prohibited and human activity is strictly monitored. Like

[zoos](#), national parks have several purposes. The foremost of these is to protect native flora and fauna. But national parks are also there so Australians and foreign visitors can enjoy and learn about our unique environment, heritage and culture. <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/national-parks>

**HEALTH AND COAL AND GAS**

Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) argue that Australians are suffering ill health and the country is incurring economic loss because of grossly inadequate assessment and management of harm to health from major developments. The rapid expansion of the coal and unconventional gas industries has created widespread community concern over health and environmental issues, but it has also exposed the inadequate government processes in permitting developments assumed to be in the interests of the economy. <http://dea.org.au/images/>

**PLANNING REFORMS?**

"With new planning reforms for NSW, the State will become a developer's paradise. No more DAs held up by a neighbour's objections, no more developers' appeals quashed by the Land and Environment Court. Anything can be built anywhere in double-quick time. A private certifier, the developers' best friend (after the planning minister), will approve whatever goes up. Once again, infrastructure is not part of the deal, nor is pesky heritage or green space."

[So wrote [in part] Jeannette Tsoulos of West Pymble to the editor SMH 24<sup>th</sup> June]

The EDO NSW, in its comments on the reforms notes a number of positives, but that two central issues of a) community participation and b) protection of the environment must not be overlooked.

EDO considers that the proposed reforms do not address ecological sustainable development [ESD], and imply a contrast [or conflict] between economic prosperity on the one hand, and environmental values & community rights on the other. Its recommendations are at <http://www.edo.org.au/edonsw/>

**GOOD NEWS FOR EDO**

The Commonwealth Government has announced that it is allocating \$300,000 this year in support of EDO NSW, compared to some \$100,000 previously.

### COMING EVENTS

**July 22<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Sharyn Cullis and Phil Andersen speaking on Travels through Three National Parks in Patagonia.**

**July 27<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day to Thirlmere Lakes.** The walk encircles three of the lakes; distance about 9 km with a well-marked track and no hills. We pass through interesting woodland, with many plants not common in Sydney, and good views of the lakes and birdlife. Go down M5 to Picton turnoff; through Picton, and turn left onto old Hume Hwy. Proceed about 3km to a large roundabout, and turn right towards the Thirlmere Railway Museum (signposted). Take the right turn across the railway crossing and then left to the Museum. Meet at 10am in the park opposite the Museum. The only public transport available is a train to Tahmoor where we could arrange to pick you up. Wear sturdy footwear, hat and sunscreen; bring snacks, lunch and water.

**Leader: Graham Fry ☎ 9580 6621** for further details or if you need a lift.

**Aug 26<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Alan Fairley speaking on Exploring the Galapagos Islands**

**Aug 31<sup>st</sup> (Sat) Field day to Muogamarra Nature Reserve** between Cowan, and the Hawkesbury River. **Leaders: J Cockayne & S Pearson ☎ 9570 8559**

**Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Dave Kirshner, "Goanna Man", speaking on Monitor Lizards.**

**Sept 28<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day to La Perouse - Leader: Jennifer Whaite ☎ 9580 7343** [details in the next newsletter]

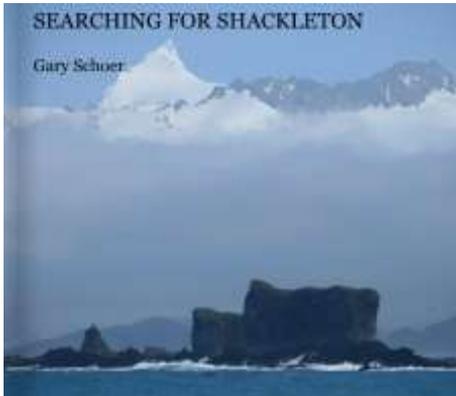
**Oct 28<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Christine Guthrie speaking on Hidden Treasures: Places & Plants in Sutherland Shire.**

**Nov 2-3<sup>rd</sup> Weekend Field Trip to Hassans Walls Orchid Sanctuary, Lithgow. Leader: John Watters ☎ 9534 1096**

### IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SHACKLETON: JUNE 24<sup>TH</sup>

Oatley resident and NPA stalwart Gary Schoer came in from the cold on Monday night to present *In the footsteps of Shackleton*, a spectacular pictorial ode to the heroic polar adventurer.

Having been to the Antarctic region on four separate occasions, Gary, on his more recent voyage, took full advantage of the 20 or so hours of sunlight each day to capture breathtakingly beautiful slides of the icy landscape, its stoic fauna and historical relics.



Elephant Island and South Georgia Island, so critical to the survival of the shipwrecked crew of the *Endurance*, impressed both with their beauty and desolation.

Gary's love and admiration for the polar area was well evident on the night, and his concern for its future was punctuated with anecdotes of drastically shrinking glaciers and crashing Adelie penguin rookeries.

On a positive note, he talked of the efforts of scientists to protect albatross populations from the perils of long line fishing by instructing fishing fleets to modify their practices with simple techniques that appear to be working.

### ROYAL NATIONAL PARK FIELD DAY: 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY

The postponement of the walk for a week because of constant rain proved a good decision as the day turned out to be a magical winter's day, with blue skies and little wind. Sixteen adults and four children met at Wattamolla car park. A number of whales were seen spouting from the first cliff lookout, and others were seen at a distance as we continued on. At Curracurrang we headed upstream to view the hidden waterhole and falls. One hardy boy, Dashiell, even took a swim. After all the rain, the track was muddy, wet in places and badly in need of repair; this made progress much slower than normal. Lunch was taken on the rocks overlooking Eagle Rock and Curracurrang Creek - a lovely spot. In all, it was another enjoyable OFF walk. [Report by Trip Leader, Alan Fairley].

### HUMAN PROGRESS!

The budget should be balanced, the Treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled, and assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed, lest Rome become bankrupt. [So wrote Cicero in 55 BCE].

### BACKYARDS FOR WILDLIFE



Magpies eat a variety of insects, moths, spiders and grubs that can be a nuisance in our lawns or houses. Willie Wagtails eat thousands of flies and mosquitoes each year. Ducks help to cycle nutrients through our waterways, eating pest grubs and applying fertilisers through their droppings. Honeyeaters help to pollinate

hundreds of plant species and owls keep down pests such as locusts, mice, rats and even snakes! These are just a small number of reasons why urban wildlife can help make our lives easier, but in the end, many people believe that a backyard without furry, feathered (and even scaled) friends would be far less interesting. [www.bathurst.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/environment/](http://www.bathurst.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/environment/)

### FOR NOTING

**Bird sighting.** On 1<sup>st</sup> July a group of white-headed pigeons were seen in Myles Dunphy Reserve feeding on the seeds fruit of privet. Other animal sightings <http://off.oatleypark.com/>

**Free tree giveaway day** Hurstville City Council is hosting this at Olds Park (next to Penshurst Branch Library) on Sun 28<sup>th</sup> July, 8.00am to 2.00pm. Details ☎ 9330 6222 [www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/)

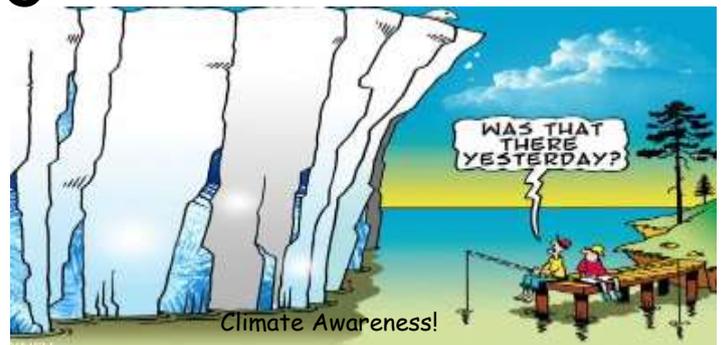
**For Art's Sake 2013** is a **FRANS INC.** fund raiser [for its services for disabled people] with this title. It is an exhibition of photographs and prints - at Sydney College of the Arts, Rozelle. Photographers are invited to submit an entry. For information, call FRANS ☎ 9799 4333. Submissions close 13<sup>th</sup> Sept, the Exhibition opens 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. [www.forartsake.org.au/](http://www.forartsake.org.au/)

**Myles Dunphy Streamwatch**, testing the creek lines flowing into the Georges River next meets 9am on Tues 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Details: Sharyn (☎9579 1262), Heather (☎ 0425 291 879).

**National Tree Day Sun 28<sup>th</sup> July & Schools Tree Day Friday 26<sup>th</sup>** provide an opportunity to do something positive for the environment and reconnect with nature. <http://treeday.planetark.org>

**Oatley Lions Festival** Saturday Oct 19<sup>th</sup>

**OFF Annual Dinner** Nov 15<sup>th</sup> [details later]





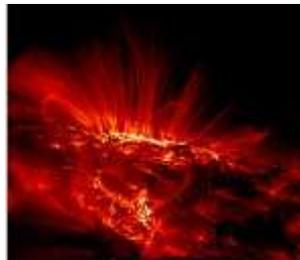
### WATTLE DAY – 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER

The Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) unofficially accepted as our Floral Emblem from federation, was proclaimed as Australia's floral emblem in 1988. The event was marked by the ceremonial planting of a Golden Wattle by Hazel Hawke at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. In 1992 the Commonwealth and States agreed to hold Wattle Day on September 1<sup>st</sup>. It had previously been held on August 1<sup>st</sup> in NSW flowering, as it does, earlier in the warmer weather. The Golden Wattle is an evergreen, spreading shrub or small tree, and grows in the under storey of open forest and woodland. When in flower, it displays the national colours of green and gold. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acacia\\_pycnantha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acacia_pycnantha)



### A COOLER SUN

*The New Scientist* notes that the recent lapse in solar activity is not the beginning of a long absence of sunspots that might cool the climate. Rather, it represents a shorter, less pronounced downturn occurring every century or so. Sunspots – dark patches that appear on the sun's surface due to intense magnetic fields – are the seat of solar activity and can affect Earth's climate in a number of ways, although the size of the effect is debated. Sunspots virtually disappeared between 1645 and 1715, a period now known as the *Maunder minimum*. Northern Europe experienced the worst winters of exceptionally cold weather in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Some now suggest that this similar lapse in solar activity could offset global warming. However, sunspot numbers vary in a natural cycle lasting some 11 years. The current cycle is meant to be at its peak now, but sunspots have been scarce since 2008, and we may be about to enter another *Maunder minimum*. [www.newscientist.com/article/](http://www.newscientist.com/article/)



A sunspot viewed close-up in ultraviolet light, taken by the TRACE spacecraft

### PROTECT THE PLACES AND WILDLIFE WE LOVE

The Humane Society International [HSI] notes that big business is pressuring federal government to hand over environmental approval powers to the States. Premiers are attacking our national parks and weakening state planning laws, and cannot be trusted to protect the places and wildlife we love. We need to let them know that we are watching, and will stand up for laws protecting precious places and wildlife. [www.hsi.org.au/](http://www.hsi.org.au/)

### BIODIVERSITY BEGINS WITH a B

"Daily reports document the tiniest rise and fall of the stock market or the price of currency. Yet the services of nature such as filtration of water, absorption of carbon dioxide and release of oxygen, protection against erosion and many others that keep the planet habitable for predators like us are virtually ignored. Pollination keeps the terrestrial ecosystems going, and without pollination those systems would collapse. A world without bees would be a world without people" – David Suzuki <http://www.operationbee.com/biodiversity.php>

### PROTECTING THE TASMANIAN DEVIL

The Federal Government has approved two mines for the Tarkine region of Tasmania, on condition that the mines fund conservation measures for Tasmanian Devils and other threatened species. The approvals follow the Federal Court overturning approval of the Shree Minerals mine on the grounds that former Environment Minister Tony Burke failed to consider conservation advice on Tasmanian Devils. The deaths of a few devils, orchids, spotted-tail quolls or wedge-tailed eagles are unlikely to have significant impacts on their populations. But what are missing from the assessments are the cumulative effects of the many mines proposed for the region. There are currently ten mines proposed in the next five years, and over 50 exploration licenses held over the region. So, how are Tasmania and the Commonwealth to account for potential cumulative impacts? [theconversation.com/tasmanias-tarkine](http://theconversation.com/tasmanias-tarkine)

### CUTTING FORESTS FOR THE FURNACE

The Nature Conservation Council notes that the NSW government is set to overturn a ban on burning native forest wood for electricity, a practice last seen in the nineteenth century. Removing the ban would give a green light for the construction of electricity plants powered almost exclusively by native forests. This is not just about feeding forest floor litter into the furnaces. Any tree that is not good enough for the saw mills could be cut and burned for energy. Lifting the ban will put our forests and native wildlife at unacceptable risk. <http://ncnsw.org.au/>

### COAL SEAM GAS

NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane was directed by Premier O'Farrell to review CSG-related activities. In her initial report she noted that coal seam gas drilling is a complex issue and divisive because of the emotive nature of community concerns, the competing interests of the players, and lack of available factual information. It poses health and environmental challenges that should be met by an overhaul of workplace training, greater transparency and more research. Professor O'Kane asked for a series of changes to create a "world class" regulatory environment. "People have a right to know the science and a right to know the impacts of the industry; transparency in regulation and governance is essential." [www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/)

### MORE ON FRACKING

The Wilderness Society is gravely concerned about plans for dams and large scale coal mining and gas fracking in the catchment of the Fitzroy River, the mightiest free-flowing river in the Kimberley. [www.wilderness.org.au/campaigns/](http://www.wilderness.org.au/campaigns/)

### BUSHCARE'S MAJOR DAY OUT

On Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> September, Hurstville Bushcare Volunteer Network and OFF are combining skills and expertise to take part in the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Bushcare's Major Day Out. Our local event will start at 9:00am at the Steamroller Picnic Grounds, Oatley Park. As well as stalls promoting community participation in Bushcare and nature conservation, there will be guided bird watching walks, a plant propagation workshop, and a spring flower walk. Full details of the program can be found on the OFF website. Locations for other *Major Day Out* Events in Sydney can be found at the organisations' website <http://www.bushcaresmajordayout.org/>

## COMING EVENTS

**Aug 26<sup>th</sup> (Mon): 7.45pm regular monthly meeting** with Alan Fairley speaking about his April 2013 trip to Galapagos Islands, unique wildlife, plants and geology.

**Aug 31<sup>st</sup> (Sat): Field day to Muogamarra Nature Reserve** between Cowan, and the Hawkesbury River. Meet at 9am at the visitors shed within the reserve to sign on and introduce ourselves. The reserve is open till 4.30pm and there is an entrance fee of \$10 per person or \$25 per family. From Sydney, head north towards Newcastle on the F3 and take the Berowra exit. Turn right onto the Pacific H'way and follow past Cowan. Park entrance is on the left approx 3km north of Cowan. Bring sturdy shoes, hat and sunscreen, morning tea and lunch. Recommend members carpool, and if anyone needs help in finding a lift please let us know. If running late, just call and we can wait for you. **Leaders: J Cockayne & S Pearson ☎ 9570 8559 ☎ 0411744715**

**Sept 8<sup>th</sup> (Sun): Bushcare's Major Day Out** <http://www.trailtalk.com.au/profiles/>

**Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon): 7.45pm regular monthly meeting** with Dave Kirshner, "Goanna Man", speaking on **Monitor Lizards**.

**Sept 28<sup>th</sup> (Sat): Field day to La Perouse** - Catch the 8.45 am train from Mortdale to Martin Place and walk to the Elizabeth St bus stop to catch the 194 bus at 9.34. We will get off at the Jennifer St boardwalk at Little Bay and follow the track around Cape Banks and Henry Head to Bare Island at La Perouse. The walk is about 8-10ks along a well-made track with good views and various points of historic interest. At the end of the walk you can have a cup of coffee or an ice-cream at the shops or have a look at the La Perouse Museum, before catching the bus back to the city. **Leader: Jennifer Whaite ☎ 9580 7343**

**Oct 28<sup>th</sup> (Mon): 7.45pm regular monthly meeting** with Christine Guthrie speaking on **Hidden Treasures: Places & Plants in Sutherland Shire**.

**Nov 2-3<sup>rd</sup> (Weekend): Field Trip to Hassans Walls Orchid Sanctuary**, Lithgow. **Leader: John Watters ☎ 9534 1096**

**Nov 15<sup>th</sup> (Fri): OFF Annual Dinner** [Details later]

**Nov 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon): 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and Social Supper** with Ann Young speaking on **Upland Swamps of the Woronora Plateau - Ecology & Mining Threats**.

**Dec 1<sup>st</sup> (Sun): Field day Royal National Park** early morning bird watching- **Leader: Deb Andrew ☎ 9570 2695**

**Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> (Mon): Christmas Picnic / BBQ** [details later]

## THREE NATIONAL PARKS IN PATAGONIA

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> July meeting Sharyn Cullis and Phil Andersen

gave a talk and picture show on the landscapes and wildlife of Patagonia. They showed some of its huge rivers, soaring peaks, beech forests, icy glaciers and some fascinating animals.

The three national parks featured



were Los Glaciares, Tierra del Fuego and Torres del Paine. The Los Glaciares NP features Mt Fitzroy and the Perito Moreno Glacier. The Tierra del Fuego NP borders on Ushuaia, the port city closest to Antarctica, and the Beagle Channel. The Torres del Paine NP has mind boggling craggy peaks, and is home to an astonishing array of wildlife including pumas, condors, guanacos, rheas and much more.

[See some here > <http://www.google.com.au/search?q=condors,guanacos,rheas>]

Sharyn mentioned some of the issues arising from the influx of tourists to these National Parks; with illegal camp fires frequently going out of control, whipped up by the fierce winds in the region, and the problems of managing tracks for tourist access through vast, wild and very cold areas.

AROUND THIRLMERE LAKES: SAT 27<sup>TH</sup> JULY

Eighteen OFF members and friends took part in the walk on a perfect winter's day with clear sunny weather. The lakes had plenty of water but the reeds around the edges gave waterbirds good cover and made spotting them tricky. It was a leisurely walk with plenty of time for appreciating nature, in particular the spring flowers which were starting to bloom and we saw at least three species of ground orchids. The bush and the lake provided plenty of material for our photographers. We had lunch at a lovely clearing and were entertained by the birds as they flitted about. With the continuing controversy surrounding coal mining under the park and its possible effect on the lakes' water, we did notice a cave with a recent rock fall that may have been caused by the mining. [Report by Leaders, Graham Fry and Liz Cameron].

There are a lot of people in this world who spend so much time watching their health that they haven't the time to enjoy it. [Josh Billings]

## FOR NOTING

**Art and Craft Show** Oatley Uniting Church, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Sept, 9 am to 7 pm.

**For Art's Sake 2013 a FRANS INC.** fund raiser [for its services for disabled people] - an exhibition of photographs and prints - at Sydney College of the Arts, Rozelle. Photographers are invited to submit an entry by 13<sup>th</sup> Sept [☎ 9799 4333]. Opens 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. [www.forartssake.org.au/](http://www.forartssake.org.au/)

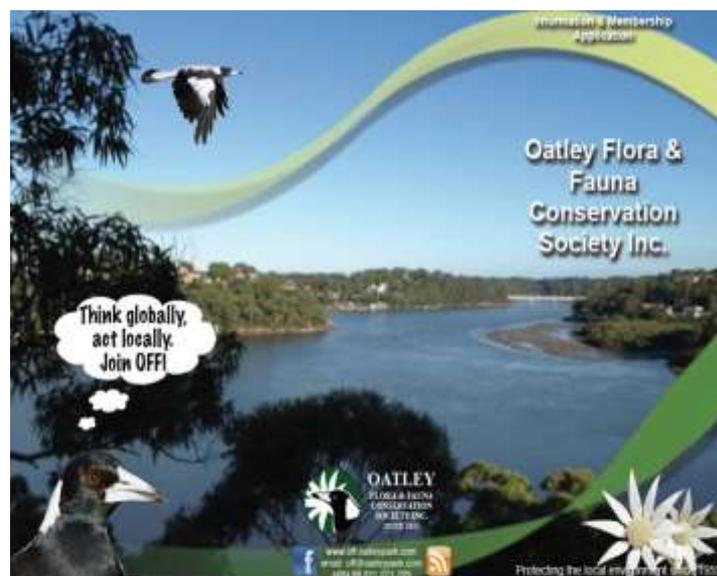
**Hut News** August edition with interesting articles including one on sustainability. "We all want human society to be sustainable, to reduce [our] net impact on our environment to zero, so that we and the natural environment can co-exist forever on Earth". [www.bluemountains.org.au/](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/)

**Myles Dunphy Streamwatch**, next meets at 9am on Tues 27<sup>th</sup> Aug. Details: Sharyn (☎9579 1262), Heather (☎ 0425 291 879).

**National Biodiversity Month** is held in September each year and aims to promote the importance of protecting, conserving and improving biodiversity both within Australia and across the world. [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/)

**Wolli Creek Preservation Society**. See their interesting newsletter including scenery, history and the WestConnex threat to the area. <http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wp-content/>

[http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli\\_valley/issues](http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli_valley/issues) : [http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli\\_valley/exhibition](http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli_valley/exhibition) :



## NEW OFF BROCHURE

OFF Secretary: Liz Cameron, P.O. Box 52 Mortdale 2223, ☎ 9580 6621, [off@oatleypark.com](mailto:off@oatleypark.com) Editor: John Davoren.  
This edition of O.F.F. News is on our website where the underlined links will take you directly to references.



### SYDNEY DRINKING WATER

There are [five major drinking water catchments](#) managed specially to provide clean drinking water to over 4 million people in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra. Large parts of the catchments have been gazetted as [Special Areas](#) designed to exclude public access and protect the quality and quantity of water to the city. Unauthorised access to Special Areas can lead to fines of up to \$44,000. These rules, however, do not prevent mining in these sensitive sites and there are 8 underground coal mines currently operating within the Sydney drinking water catchments. Over the last 20 years, long wall mining in the catchments has led to major land subsidence. This in turn has caused cracking and draining of rivers, creek beds and undergrounds aquifers, cliff falls, draining of swamps, fish kills, methane gas bubbling to the surface of creeks and rivers, and iron oxide pollution, and the discharge of polluted mine water into local creek systems. Despite these known impacts, confirmed by an [official inquiry](#), mining is still occurring immediately adjoining creeks and rivers in the catchment causing methane vents and creek fracturing.

[http://www.lockthegate.org.au/our\\_water](http://www.lockthegate.org.au/our_water)

### ENVIRONMENT VERSUS ECONOMY

The chequered story of the native forest industry and the ever-growing subsidies from governments is noted in *The Australian Native Forest Sector: Causes of the decline and prospects for the future* prepared earlier this year by Andrew Macintosh, of the ANU. His Report notes that while the industry has been adversely affected by conservation measures, the global financial crisis and the high dollar, these are secondary to its underlying problem of declining demand for its products. This has bankrupted the native hardwood industry's largest producer, Gunns Ltd, and State forest authorities have recorded a loss of some \$150m in the last four years.

The common perception that protecting the environment is in conflict with the economy provides the industry with a persuasive case for continued government handouts. If the community wants to restrict the logging of native forests in Tasmania, it assumes it should compensate the industry and workers for loss of livelihood. The federal government has been doing this for years. In 1989 the Tasmanian forestry sector received \$42 m, in 1997 \$110 m, in 2005 \$203 m, and in 2013 \$300 m.

Taxpayers are supporting a collapsing industry and allowing it to continue doing avoidable damage to native forests. "If conservationists had more sense they would join the economic rationalists in urging governments to stop giving subsidies to an industry trying to defy market realities". Ross Gittins SMH 31/08/2013 ■ [www.smh.com.au/business/](http://www.smh.com.au/business/)

### RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

*Beyond Zero Emissions Inc.* [BZE] is a not-for-profit research and education organisation seeking the implementation of a zero emissions economy for Australia. Its goal is to move from a fossil fuel based, emissions intensive economy to a renewable-energy-powered one in line with the latest science. The University of Melbourne's Energy Institute and BZE have published the *Stationary Energy Plan*, a fully costed proposal for achieving zero emissions in ten years with commercially available technology. Much more on renewable technology at <http://bze.org.au/> & [theconversation.com/renewable-energy-](http://theconversation.com/renewable-energy-) & [www.aussierenewables.com/](http://www.aussierenewables.com/)

### HASSANS WALLS RESERVE

This principal destination for our November field trip is located 3.5km south of Lithgow CBD. It is an area of 770 hectares with spectacular cliffs, lookouts, and pagoda rock formations. The exact date of the naming of Hassans Walls is unclear, but it was probably in 1815 when Governor Macquarie was on his way to Bathurst. The site reminded him of a place of that name in northern India where he had military service in 1803.



Hassans Walls Lookout is the highest lookout in the Blue Mountains, approximately 1,100 metres above sea level, with a view to Mount Wilson, Mount York, Mount Tarana and Mount Blaxland and the whole Hartley Valley. Classified a Crown Land Reserve in 1978 with Lithgow City Council as trustees, it is home to over 60 varieties of native orchids and other beautiful wildflowers. The plants of the Reserve include towering Eucalypts of many varieties, and understory plants - Banksia, Wattle, Waratah, Daviesia, Phyllota, Prickly Moses, Smooth Geebung, Drumstick Tea Tree, Native Grasses, Curly Wig and Tree Ferns. Blackthorn can be found on the lower slopes providing a habitat for the Purple Copper Butterfly. Orchids abound with some 60 different species observed.

Among threatened animals in the Reserve are the Purple Copper Butterfly, (only found in the Bathurst, Oberon and Lithgow areas), the Powerful Owl, Spotted Tail Quoll and the Gang Gang Cockatoo. There are Rock Wallabies, Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Possums, Eastern Rosellas, Sulphur Crested Cockatoos, and Currawongs.

Pagoda rocks can be found in the Reserve, made up of sedimentary shale and sandstone, mainly Permian and Triassic. The terrain ranges from open heath-land to forest, and ferns can be found in some of the gullies. Evidence of Aboriginal activity in the Hassans Walls Reserve exists in the form of middens and rock art. In accordance with the wishes of the traditional custodians of the Lithgow area, the Wiradjuri, locations are not publicised but may be stumbled upon when exploring the Reserve. Tourist information is available at the Visitors Centre Great Western Highway Lithgow ☎ 1300760276 ■

<http://www.lithgow-tourism.com/>

### COAL SEAM GAS EXPANSION

Mining companies are carrying out test drilling around the country and current legislation does not give landowners the right to veto this drilling. Landowners are protesting but seemingly without much success. For details around the northern rivers go to <http://csgfreenorthernrivers.org/csg-free-communities/>

### LIONS FESTIVAL - OATLEY - 19<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER

Each year, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October the streets and parks of Oatley are transformed into a sea of stalls, entertainment, rides, and music. OFF runs a stall each year, and is looking for volunteers for the day, or any part thereof. Please contact Liz ☎9580 6621 or Alan ☎9570 8332 closer to the time. For more information [www.oatleylions.org.au/](http://www.oatleylions.org.au/)



### COMING EVENTS

**Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting.** Note that **Dave Kirshner**, who was to speak on monitor lizards, is unable to attend, and instead **John Davoren** will be speaking on **Environmental Dilemmas**.

**Sept 28<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day to La Perouse.** The walk is about 8-10ks along a well-made track with good views and various points of historic interest. Catch the 8.45 am train from Mortdale to Martin Place and walk to the Elizabeth St bus stop to catch the 194 bus at 9.34. We will get off at the Jennifer St boardwalk at Little Bay and follow the track around Cape Banks and Henry Head to Bare Island at La Perouse. At the end of the walk, you can have a cup of coffee or an ice cream at the shops or have a look at the La Perouse Museum, before catching the bus back to the city. **Leader: Jennifer Whaite ☎ 9580 7343**

**Oct 28<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting with Christine Guthrie speaking on Hidden Treasures: Places & Plants in Sutherland Shire.**

**Nov 2-3<sup>rd</sup> (Weekend) Field Trip to Hassans Walls Orchid Sanctuary, Lithgow.** This weekend event will begin with a guided walk in the Reserve noting the native orchids and other rare plants, and go onto the Secret Sanctuary for a tour and an evening meal at the Restaurant. Participants should arrange their accommodation for Sat night. Sunday has a number of possibilities that can be discussed on arrival. See details of HW above. **Leader: John Watters/ ☎ 9534 1096**

**Nov 15<sup>th</sup> (Fri): The OFF Annual Dinner scheduled for this date has been deferred.** [See the note below\*].

**Nov 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and Social Supper with Ann Young speaking on Upland Swamps of the Woronora Plateau - Ecology & Mining Threats.**

**Dec 1<sup>st</sup> (Sun) Field day Royal National Park early morning bird watching- Leader: Deb Andrew ☎ 9570 2695**

**Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) Christmas Picnic in Oatley Park [details later]**

**Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) AGM followed by members' photos & supper & Feb 24<sup>th</sup> 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and Social Supper**

### EXPLORING THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS TALK

About 45 people attended our August 24<sup>th</sup> meeting to hear Alan Fairley's presentation on Galapagos Islands that he and Chiew visited in April. The emphasis was on the great diversity of wildlife to be seen, the endemic flora and the importance of the islands to Charles Darwin and the early formation of his theory of



evolution through natural selection. The talk was enhanced by photos of the beautiful and varied scenery and the close-ups of animals, many of which are found only on specific islands. It was an enjoyable and informative evening.

### MUOGAMARRA NATURE RESERVE WALK 31<sup>ST</sup> AUG

Muogamarra Nature Reserve was awash with native flowers of bright pinks and sunny yellows. It was here that a group of 30 members of OFF, Menai Wildflower Group and Hurstville Council Bushcare enjoyed the splendour of the last day of winter. We were a little too early for flowering of most of the waratahs, but we did manage to see some of these iconic specimens, and the boronias, eriostemons and pultenaeas were in full flower.

The reserve offers various walks of different grades, aspects and views and has a deep history of colonial existence. The NPWS staff and volunteers were very knowledgeable and extremely helpful about the program of walks available – either as a guided walk or as an amble at your own pace.

This is the second year we have been to this reserve and we always experience or see something different. As the reserve is only open 6 weekends a year check out NPWS website for next year's opening times. [Report by Leaders Jason & Sharon]

[Click here to see movie of Spring in Muogamarra Nature Reserve on our Face book site](#)

### WE HAVE A FACEBOOK PAGE

OFF is committed to finding new ways to protect the environment. We now have a Facebook page for you to make comments, upload photos or chat about environmental issues. Please visit the page and "like" to keep in touch with updates.

<https://www.facebook.com/OatleyFloraandFauna?ref=hl>

- Report faulty streetlights to AUSGRID
- Please ensure you have the following details ready:
  - Street location; • Pole number;
  - How many always on, or always off, or going on and off.

### \*OFF ANNUAL DINNER – deferred to mid-2014

The OFF committee decided not to hold the OFF dinner in November this year because of rising costs, falling attendances, and the hectic end-of-year activities for most of us. However, we are planning for an OFF Dinner mid-year celebration in 2014, and would welcome your suggestions for a venue and theme.

Do join us for the next two OFF social events - the 25<sup>th</sup> Nov meeting and Social Supper, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec annual picnic in Oatley Park.

The Annual Super Raffle will now be held at the 25<sup>th</sup> Nov meeting. Everyone has been generous with raffle donations in the past, and we need your help again; proceeds from the raffle are donated to conservation organisations, and last year \$200 was raised. Please search your cupboards for attractive but unwanted gifts and items purchased but never used, and anything else suitable. Donated items will be gratefully received at the next three meetings; or you can bring them to me at 41 Lloyd Street. Many thanks for your support. Sue Howard ☎ 9579 1718

### FOR NOTING

**M**yles Dunphy Streamwatch, next meets at 9am on Tues 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Details: Sharyn (☎9579 1262), Heather (☎ 0425 291 879).

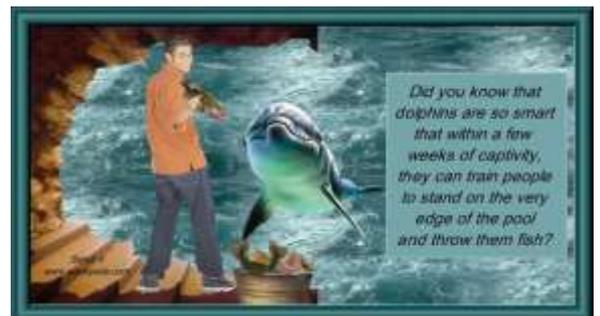
**M**embership renewal for 2014 can be by direct bank transfer [more detail when the renewal notice is sent out]. New members are welcome. Click here for [details](#).

**M**ulga Road Books 89 Mulga Rd Oatley W is operated by Rotary Hurstville and has a wide range of quality second hand books. ■ <http://rotarcap.com/mrb/>

**S**peakers: Our Program Officer is looking for interesting speakers on subjects related to flora and fauna for our meetings next year. Please contact Matt ☎ 9570 8271.

**W**alks: Our Field Officer is looking for people to lead interesting walks. Please contact Alison ☎ 9580 5557

**W**orld Habitat Day is on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October to reflect on the state of human settlements and people's right to sufficient shelter. It aims to remind people of their responsibility for habitat for the future. ■ [www.national-awareness-days.com/](http://www.national-awareness-days.com/)





### PROTECT SYDNEY WATER

A coalition of 50 groups [of which OFF is one] from across Sydney, Illawarra, the Southern Highlands and Blue Mountains has been launched to protect Sydney's drinking water from destructive mining practices. The alliance, called *Protect Sydney's Water*, has statistics showing overwhelming opposition to coal mining and coal seam gas development in drinking water catchments. The poll found 87% support for banning coal mining and coal seam gas activities in water catchment areas and within 2 kilometres of rivers and wetlands. Sydney's drinking water, coming from catchments from the Shoalhaven and Illawarra to the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury, is a critical resource for more than 4.5 million people.

Sydney Catchment Authority figures show that four longwall coalmines\* drain about 3 billion litres a year from the water supply - enough water to fill 1,200 Olympic-sized swimming pools or for 43 million 10-minute showers. Coal seam gas fields are now the latest threat, with exploration licences covering most of the catchment. \*[BHP-Billiton's Dendrobium, Peabody's Metropolitan, NRE's Gujarat and Wongawilli] [nccnsw.org.au/media/water](http://nccnsw.org.au/media/water)

### ENVIRONMENT VERSUS ECONOMY

Is it possible to maintain or increase energy supplies while cutting back on greenhouse gas emissions? The ABC notes that some think it not possible, and that the only option would be to do away with economic growth, an argument that does not go down well in many quarters. New studies conclude that the world can have its cake and eat it – economic growth can continue while emissions are cut. [www.abc.net.au/environment/](http://www.abc.net.au/environment/)

An example is the recent discovery of a carbon neutral thermocell at Monash University. This can harvest wasted heat from power stations [or vehicle exhaust pipes] and convert it into electricity.



[Monash.edu/news](http://Monash.edu/news)

### WAVE ENERGY

Ocean waves, tidal and non-tidal ocean flows, are attracting increasing interest in Australia as a potentially viable source of renewable energy. A CSIRO study concludes that ocean waves could supply about 10% of Australia's electricity by 2050. [Ocean Renewable Energy: 2015-2050](http://Ocean Renewable Energy: 2015-2050) notes that the areas that could benefit from ocean energy technology include Perth, the southern coastline and to a lesser extent the east. Wave energy has the greatest potential for Australia. The southern coastline has the greatest wave resource because strong southern ocean winds generate consistently large waves that travel northwards to that coastline. The large consistent swell provides ideal conditions for wave energy production. The east coast also provides a consistent, although not as large, wave energy resource. [www.aussierenewables.com](http://www.aussierenewables.com)

### OFF's FACEBOOK PAGE

Our Facebook page is for you to make comments, upload photos or chat about environmental issues. Please visit the page and "like" to keep in touch with updates.

[www.facebook.com/OatleyFloraandFauna](http://www.facebook.com/OatleyFloraandFauna)

### ANOTHER TASMANIAN PULP MILL

There is currently a proposal under consideration for another a pulp mill at Longreach on the Tamar River [as pictured].



The area is of great natural scenic beauty with a 100,000 population. An alternative site, an unpopulated area near Hampshire, surrounded by vast forests, was not put forward. It is

questionable that the mill could succeed financially, and [The Herzfeld Report](#) in 2007 noted that the resulting large amount of effluent into Bass Strait makes pulp mills in this area unacceptable. [The attached website has been following this saga for over seven years. [www.tamarpulpmill.info/](http://www.tamarpulpmill.info/)]

### COALPAC PROJECT ASSESSMENT

The NSW Dept of Planning & Infrastructure on October 4<sup>th</sup> issued an Assessment Report on the Coalpac Consolidation Project involving open cut mining along the valleys and slopes at the western edge of the Ben Bullen State Forest. In summary the Report states, that while the substantial economic benefits and implications of not proceeding with the Project are fully recognised, it is concluded that the nature and scale of the environmental impacts of the current proposal are not acceptable. It is therefore recommended that the mining operations as currently proposed not be approved. [However, it states] there may be some merit in allowing a smaller extension that avoids the most sensitive parts of the site. This would enable some of the remaining coal resources to be extracted, the existing mining voids filled and appropriately rehabilitated, and a suitable final landform created that integrates with the surrounding landscape. [See the Report online](#)

& [www.facebook.com/protectgardensofstone](http://www.facebook.com/protectgardensofstone)

### OUR MANGROVES UNDER STRESS

Geoff Francis reports that some Grey Mangroves along Lime Kiln Bay near the footbridge appear in poor health. Insect attacks have formed galls on the leaves, leaf margins have been eaten by caterpillars and there is some fungus like brown rust. The leaves on some branches have died and fallen off. However, other mangroves nearby on the southern bank seem quite healthy.

#### Crimson Rosella

Large red and blue parrot with blue cheeks. Young birds are greenish. Prefers eucalypt forests and is common in the Blue Mountains. Feeds in trees and on the ground, on the seeds of eucalypts, grasses and shrubs. Clear piping calls.

34 cm

#### Platycercus elegans



[Common Bird Species from "Birds of Oatley Park" a photographic guide](#)

### COMING EVENTS

**Oct 28<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting with Christine Guthrie speaking on Hidden Treasures: Places & Plants in Sutherland Shire.** Christine has recently retired as Manager of Sutherland Shire Bushcare.

**Nov 2-3<sup>rd</sup> (Weekend) Field Trip to Hassans Walls Orchid Sanctuary, Lithgow.** Meet at 9.30am Saturday at the northern, Bent St, end of the Valley Plaza car park [Lithgow St](#) Lithgow. Bring hat, sunscreen, lunch, water and binoculars for views from the lookouts. There are no toilets in the Reserve. Participants should arrange their accommodation for Saturday night. A possible social dinner and options for Sunday can be discussed on arrival. **Saturday Leader: John Watters ☎ 9534 1096**

**Nov 15<sup>th</sup> (Fri): Our Annual Dinner scheduled for this date has been deferred until next year.** [See the note below.\*].

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2014

**Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) AGM** followed by members' photos & social supper.

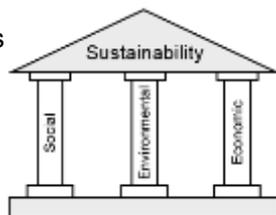
**Feb 24<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and Social Supper**

### SEPT 23<sup>RD</sup> TALK: ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMAS

Dave Kirshner, who was to speak at the September meeting on monitor lizards, was unable to attend. Instead, there was a presentation on our environment and the dilemmas facing an effective program for protecting and conserving it.

The environmental areas listed as threatened and/or threatening included the dramatic rise in population, the drain on energy resources, and the devaluation of air, land, water, flora, fauna, and food. The extent of the impact of human activity on the environment is hotly debated, and protection measures severely criticised. Those not convinced of a significant human contribution consider expenditure on environmental protection as an unproductive and unnecessary waste in these fiscally trying times. The economic argument slows the implementation of protective processes, and the picture is further muddled, with disagreement on precisely what protection can and should be provided.

Conserving a healthy environment is important, and if we do not temper our use of natural resources, they will eventually be exhausted. What we need is sustainability, where we can live within our planet's means socially, environmentally and economically. [\[more on our website\]](#) & [www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/](http://www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/)



### LA PEROUSE FIELD DAY 28<sup>th</sup> Sept

Eleven enjoyed Jennifer Whaite's coastal walk from Little Bay to La Perouse. They included Jennifer's granddaughter Heidi from Albury, and Adrienne Smith, a former OFF member now living in Wagga Wagga. It was a fine hot day with breezes gusting round Henry Head where they lunched. Some of the party had walked the track in the opposite direction, but the rest were seeing the attractive coastal heath and hind-dune woodland for the first time. Jennifer provided an historic background to the area and there was plenty of entertainment. The Westpac Rescue Helicopter crew let off lurid flares during the morning tea at Cape Banks. They were able to admire the skill of golfers teeing off from the tiny green on the rocky promontory, which supported a wide range of hardy native plants including flannel flowers in bloom. Swallows, kestrels, kites and a hobby manoeuvred expertly around the cliffs, and they saw the *James Craig* sailing south to meet ships heading for the Navy's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in Sydney Harbour.

It was an easy walk and the only difficulties were experienced by Heidi, who seemed to slip frequently on the smoother sections of the path. A later inspection showed that her sneakers were in fact roller sneakers, with wheels in the heels, a trap for unwary grandparents!

At the completion of the walk at La Perouse, some had a refreshing swim in Botany Bay, while the rest indulged in iced coffee. See something of La Perouse at

[www.google.com.au/search?q=la+perouse](http://www.google.com.au/search?q=la+perouse)

### OATLEY PARK WALKING TRACKS BROCHURE

OFF has received a grant of \$1500 from the Minister of Environment's Conservation Fund to publish a colour brochure on Oatley Park Walking Tracks. Mark Coure, MP for Oatley, assisted in obtaining the grant. A presentation was made by the Environment Minister Robyn Parker on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct at *The Castle* in the Park to Alan Fairley and Graham Fry representing OFF. Research on the walks is now well underway. This is in addition to the \$500 recently provided by Oatley RSL towards printing the brochure on "Native Plants of Oatley Park", soon to be published.

### \*THE ANNUAL SUPER RAFFLE

With our annual dinner deferred, the raffle will now be held at the 25<sup>th</sup> Nov meeting. We are seeking your help again with raffle donations; the proceeds are donated to conservation organisations. Donated items will be gratefully received at the Oct meeting; or you can bring them to me at 41 Lloyd St. [Thanks for your support. Sue Howard ☎ 9579 1718]

### FOR NOTING

**C**ruelty Free Festival Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. Find out how to save animals at Belmore Park, Haymarket. <http://crueltyfreefestival.org.au/>

**M**embership renewal for 2014 can be by direct bank transfer [more detail when the renewal notice is sent out]. New members are most welcome. [off.oatleypark.com/membership](http://off.oatleypark.com/membership)

**M**yles Dunphy Streamwatch, next meets at 9am on Tues 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. Details: Sharyn (☎9579 1262), Heather (☎0425 291 879).

**M**ulga Road Books 89 Mulga Rd Oatley W is operated by Rotary Hurstville and has a wide range of quality second hand books. <http://rotarcap.com/mrb/>

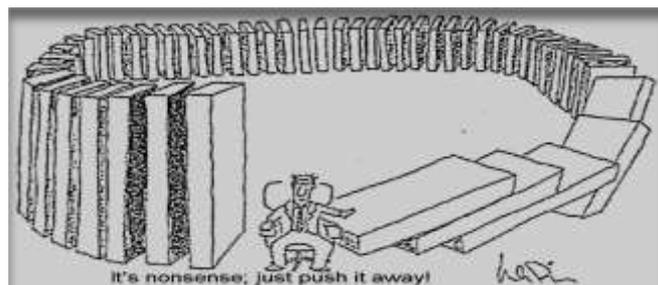
**N**ational Water Week is on 20-26<sup>th</sup> Oct. It is held every year to raise awareness of issues surrounding Australia's most precious resource. [www.savewater.com.au/national-water-week](http://www.savewater.com.au/national-water-week)

**O**atley Heritage & Historical Society: The next meeting is on Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> Nov at 10.30 at Oatley RSL with Julian Sheen and Rodger Robertson speaking about Oatley in 1913, "One Hundred Years Ago" <http://www.oatleyheritagegroup.com/>

**S**peakers wanted: Our Program Officer is looking for interesting speakers on subjects related to flora and fauna for our meetings next year. Please contact Matt ☎ 9570 8271.

**T**he Road to Sustainability - Transport an interesting article by Ross Coster, in the October Hut News [www.bluemountains.org.au/](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/)

**W**alks: Our Field Officer is looking for people to lead interesting walks. Please contact Alison ☎ 9580 5557





**VALE GRAHAM AUSTIN [6 Dec 1933 – 15 Nov 2013]**

It is with great regret that we advise that after a long battle with cancer Graham passed away on Friday 15<sup>th</sup>. Graham and Janet joined OFF in 1975 and served the Society strenuously for 38 years. Their many involvements included *Clean up Australia Day*, and the planning processes for Moore Reserve and Port Botany.

They played a significant role in having the old Como Bridge rail line opened as a walkway in 1985. Graham led an OFF walk over the bridge in April - one of the best attended in this year's program.

Graham served on the OFF committee for eleven years, with four as Vice-president.

The funeral will be on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov at 3pm at South Chapel, Woronora Cemetery Sutherland. For further details, please see the notice in the SMH.



**FIRE SURVIVAL HOUSE DESIGN**

In recent bushfires, the media focused on the trauma and the number of houses destroyed. No mention was made of the solution of building houses able to withstand fire. After more than two centuries, we still reject the obvious: that we live in an extreme, fire-prone environment. We still act as though we live in Britain, where rain falls gently through the year and the land is green. Even our standard rainwater gutters are incorrectly sized. The solution requires a rethink of Australian house design, and a new approach to the layout and construction of settlements in the bush, avoiding isolated dispersed dwellings, and adopting an intelligent design for a fire survival house. Philip Drew: [www.smh.com.au/](http://www.smh.com.au/)

**RISKS OF EXTREME EVENTS AND DISASTERS**

Sydney Law School is hosting climate scientist Professor Chris Field from Stanford University to deliver a Distinguished Scholar address. The title of his address is *Climate Change: Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters*. Prof Field is the Co-Chair of the IPCC's Working Group II on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. He will be discussing the IPCC's fifth Assessment Report.

Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> Dec, 6-7pm followed by cocktail reception at [New Law School Building \(F10\), Eastern Ave Syd Uni](http://www.newlaw.edu.au/) Cost: Full Fee \$15, Students/Alumni/NGO \$10

**WE NEED A BULLET TRAIN!**

*The Road to Sustainability* - was an article in the October Hut News by Ross Coster. Writing principally on transport he argued that there is a strong case for an electrified fast rail passenger network joining the capital cities, and he cannot understand why people assume that it will not be built. A fast rail network would dramatically reduce the fuel used by planes, as most of their flights are between the capital cities. If there were a fast rail link between Sydney and Melbourne, there would be no need for Sydney to have a second airport. [www.bluemountains.org.au/](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/)



High speed "bullet" train of Belgium (Microsoft)

**ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE ATTACK**

Friends, supporters and observers of [EDO NSW](http://www.edo.nsw.gov.au/) may have noticed a new round of attacks from the NSW Minerals Council and *The Australian* against the Environmental Defenders Office. *The Australian* is obviously of the view that activists and lobby groups should not have any legal assistance when fighting for environmental restrictions on the coal industry. The attacks need to be taken with a grain of salt; but the headline **PUBLIC-FUNDED EDO CIRCUS MUST END** was extremely offensive. [us5.campaign-archive1.com/](http://us5.campaign-archive1.com/)

**GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS**

The SMH notes that the hundreds of scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] are more confident than ever about greenhouse gas emissions posing a problem, even though their precise long-term impact cannot be quantified precisely. Yet, Australia is preparing to become the first country to repeal laws requiring big business to pay to release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere – [according to most economists](http://www.smh.com.au/) - the most effective way, of reducing emissions. While US and China are looking to the long term and stepping up plans to cut emissions by 15 to 25%, Australia is not committed to more than a 5% cut by 2020.

**COALPAC PROJECT ASSESSMENT**

On 4<sup>th</sup> October, the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure [DP&I] issued a [media release](http://www.dp&i.nsw.gov.au/) stating -"The Department of Planning and Infrastructure has recommended that the Coalpac Consolidation Project [CCP] near Lithgow not be approved in its current form.

The Department's assessment report and recommendation can be found on the [DPI website](http://www.dp&i.nsw.gov.au/) and a map on the media release is on [www.bluemountains.org.au/documents](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents). BMCS notes that "before euphoria takes over", the DP&I rejected the CCP "in its present form" and "the independent Planning Assessment Commission" (PAC 2) will now make the final decision. <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/>

**PLASTIC POISON**

Tens of thousands of whales, birds, seals and turtles are killed every year from plastic bag litter in the marine environment as they often mistake plastic bags for food like jellyfish. As plastic bags can take up to 1000 years to break down, once an animal dies and decays after ingesting plastic, the plastic is then freed back into the marine environment to carry on killing other wildlife.

Australians are second only to Americans as the highest producers of waste, per person, in the world. Plastic has remained the most common category of rubbish picked up on *Clean Up Australia Day* over the last 20 years. An estimated 3.76 billion bags or 20,700 tonnes of plastic are disposed of in landfill sites yearly, and around 50 million bags enter the litter stream. Unless they are collected, they remain in the environment and accumulate at a staggering rate. [www.cleanup.org.au/](http://www.cleanup.org.au/)

**SNOWY MOUNTAINS 2014**

Our annual trip to Smiggin Holes Chalet is from Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February. [Costs per night are \$113 double, or twin share, \$93 single, and \$43 per child 6-18]. For information and booking, phone Robin Dickson ☎ 9580 5663.

## COMING EVENTS

**Nov 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and Social Supper with Ann Young speaking on Upland Swamps of the Woronora Plateau - Ecology & Mining Threats.**

Due to regulations applying to the church hall, the Super Raffle will now be held at the 2014 Annual Dinner. Thank you to those who have already contributed. Your gifts will be safely stored in my garage until June/July 2014. Sue Howard

**Dec 1<sup>st</sup> (Sun) Field day Royal National Park** early morning bird watching- We meet at 7am at Fern Tree Flat, the last picnic area on Lady Carrington Drive just north of the locked gate with a large car park, shelter shed and toilets. We will amble down towards Jersey Springs, about 3km from the locked gate, and spend about 2 to 3 hours, then wander back to the picnic area by about 10:30-11:00am. Bring a thermos and something for morning tea at Fern Tree Flat, and binoculars will be helpful. It takes about 30-40 minutes to drive from Oatley to Fern Tree Flat. **Leader: Deb Andrew ☎ 9570 2695**

**Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) Christmas Picnic, our annual Christmas get-together** in Oatley Park at the Steamroller from 5.30pm. **BYO** food, drinks, picnic chairs, table etc. Barbecues are available if there is no fire alert announced. For any queries, ring Liz Cameron ☎ 9580 6621.

**Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Annual General Meeting**, with the election of officers, a show of members' photos and supper. Members are encouraged to bring interesting photos; [22.5 is the recommended benchmark!]

**Feb 24<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and Social Supper.**

## PLACES & PLANTS IN SUTHERLAND SHIRE

Our Oct 28<sup>th</sup> speaker Christine Guthrie, an Oatley local and former manager of Bushcare at Sutherland Shire Council, shared her intimate knowledge of Sutherland Shire's more interesting bushland with a strong emphasis on threatened vegetation and vulnerable habitat. Chris brought to our attention the salt marsh for migratory waders, pockets of littoral rainforest, remnants of turpentine/ironbark forest and an extremely rare beetle (the endangered *Menippus fugitivus*).

The beetles feed on the rainforest tree *Celtis paniculata* at Grays Point Reserve.

These were only some of the gems discussed, proving yet again how important it is to ensure protection for what little remnant bushland we have.

More on plants at: [sutherland.austplants.com.au/](http://sutherland.austplants.com.au/)



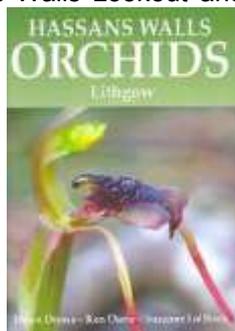
**HASSANS WALLS RESERVE FIELD DAY: 2<sup>nd</sup> NOV**  
Eleven members, five friends and two guides met at the Lithgow Plaza car park. Our very informative guides, Suzanne Lollback and Helen Drewe, from Lithgow Community Nursery, and co-authors of [Hassans Walls Orchids](#) gave the group an initial briefing.

We then proceeded by car to Hassans Walls Lookout and more interesting information from our guides. Panoramic views of the Hartley Valley were seen from the lookout, and the guides pointed out a wide range of flora including a diverse island remnant.

Morning tea was followed by a short drive to [Braceys Lookout](#). On the way, a number of native orchids were sighted. Lunch was taken at the lookout where we enjoyed views of Lithgow. After lunch, we took another short drive near the lookout and noted an endangered purple copper butterfly. We parked on the access road to the reserve for a comprehensive study of the plants growing along the bank.

The tour finished at 3pm with a return to the car park – a most satisfying day!

Nine members stayed overnight and dined at the Secret Creek Restaurant. On Sunday, some visited the Blackheath Rhododendron Gardens. [Report by John Watters: field day leader]



## OFF COMMITTEE MEMBERS - 2014

There are several vacancies in the present Committee, with provision for 15 elected members. These lively meetings occur monthly, usually a week after the monthly meeting. They attend to correspondence, finance, policies, and activities. If the idea of becoming a committee member appeals to you, please contact Liz Cameron ☎ 9580 6621.

## LEAD A FIELD DAY IN 2014

We are looking for walk leaders. If there is a favourite bushland or heritage walk of up to 10km that you are prepared to lead for an O.F.F. outing, please contact our Field Officer, Alison Gilroy, ☎ 9580 5557.

## OFF MEMBERSHIP

This month all members will receive OFF News by mail enclosing the fee renewal notice. New members are most welcome. Membership fees for 2014 can be paid by way of money order, cheque or bank transfer. [See the renewal notice.]

## SPEAKERS FOR 2014

Our Program Officer is looking for interesting speakers for our monthly meetings next year on subjects related to flora and fauna. Please contact Matt ☎ 9570 8271.

## FOR NOTING

**Myles Dunphy Streamwatch**, next meets at 9am on Tues Nov 26<sup>th</sup>. Details: Sharyn (☎9579 1262), Heather (☎0425 291 879).

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