



O.F.F. NEWS

Published by

OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY



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JANUARY, 1984.

Do you ever feel that conservation battles are never won? There are significant achievements, but these apparent victories are being constantly undermined. Conservationists must be ever alert, ever on guard, to ensure that hard-won gains are not eroded away. It is not enough (as those involved in the saga of Oatley Park know only too well) to simply reserve a patch of bush or reef or rainforest. Once reserved, it is necessary to make sure the park is managed properly and to protect it from the multitude of outside pressures. These thoughts have been prompted by the number of serious threats to existing national parks which have recently been reported. Here is just a selection to illustrate the great pressures being put on our natural areas:

DAMMING THE CLYDE. The Clyde River is a major feature of the Budawangs and the southern part of Morton National Park. Its catchment is almost undisturbed and it is one of the most natural rivers in N.S.W. It cuts through the remarkably scenic Pigeon House - Castle area. Shoalhaven City Council plans to build several dams and weirs in the catchment to supply water to the thirsty tourist towns of Milton and Ulladulla. The project is based on unpublished estimates of projected water consumption and the National Parks Association questions whether it is really needed and the undue haste of bureaucrats to begin the work before adequate studies have been made.

VEHICLES ON BEACHES. There is a strong push by the four wheel drive and beach fishing lobby to get the National Parks and Wildlife Service to agree to allow vehicles unrestricted use of beaches. The issue has arisen especially on the north coast at Yuraygir and Crowdy Bay National Parks. Most people who go to a national park to enjoy its beauty and quiet are totally opposed to vehicles being allowed on beaches, but there is a danger that without strong protests the park authorities will bow to local pressure.

POWER LINES, WOLLEMI. Everyone was pleased when the Government set aside the Wollemi wilderness as a national park. Now there is a proposal to route a 500 KV transmission line (with its easement and associated roads) through the park. So much for the concept of wilderness!!

A TRIBUTE TO ARNOLD BRYDEN. Members of the Society were saddened to hear of the death of Arnold Bryden on 8th September, 1983. Many newer members would not know of his dedication to the cause of conservation. Ida Carder has written this tribute so that Arnold's efforts will not be forgotten.

"For most of his life Arnold was keenly interested in all branches of conservation. All his holidays and most of his spare time were spent in this cause. He visited and worked on many reserves and national parks. He was a voluntary member of the Bush Fire Brigade at Barren Grounds; he worked at Cudmirrah Nature Reserve, at Munghorn Gap, Cocoparra National Park, at Pulletop (the mallee fowl reserve) and at Piccaninny Ponds and Gammon Wilderness in South Australia. One of his lesser known but very important projects was the recording of Aboriginal art for the National Parks and Wildlife Service - painstaking work requiring skill, patience and lots of time. Another was the reading of Hansard for the National Parks Association. Down the South Coast, he vigorously opposed the woodchip industry. His comments and photographs were published periodically in the 'Southern Star'. He studied and commented on soil erosion and the use of insecticides in agriculture.

On the home front, Arnold was one of the early members of this Society. Until his illness he was Vice-President; he duplicated OFF News, and he was Treasurer until Harry Whaite took over. He was always interested in problems concerning the Society. At one stage he collected hundreds of signatures on a petition to Hurstville Council to protect Lime Kiln Bay."

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held in the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

February 6th (Monday). BITS AND PIECES. 7.45 p.m. Our first meeting of the new year. An opportunity to talk, catch up on where everyone's been for their holidays, to renew your membership and to collect the printed programme for the year. The night will include a members slide showing. This is your chance to show off some of your recent photos. Bring along up to 10 slides. Categories include animals (of all sorts), plants (native, we hope), national parks, other beauty spots and people and trips (where are all those pictures members take on outings?). There will be an award for the best slide of the evening.
Supper to follow the meeting - bring a plate, please, preferably with something on it!!

27th (Monday). 7.45 p.m. N.S.W. WETLANDS. A talk and slides by Ron West of the N.S.W. Fisheries Department. The conservation of wetlands is becoming a major issue throughout the world as they become filled in, drained and polluted. Hear an expert's view on the situation in this State.

March 3rd (Saturday). FORESHORES WALK, SYDNEY HARBOUR. This is a beauty! Walk along the tracks on the north side of the harbour from Bradleys Head and the Zoo. A very pleasant day. We are very lucky to have as the leader of this outing Alan Morris, Superintendent of Sydney Harbour National Park and an acknowledged expert on bird identification. Meet at Oatley Station 8 a.m. Train to Circular Quay and ferry to Zoo wharf.

Flower Study Day. There will be no flower study walk in Oatley Park in January or February. The next one will be on the first Monday in March. Watch OFF News for details.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION - Resolve this year to bring at least one friend to an OFF meeting or field day. It is vital if we wish to continue to fight for conservation that we have an active and interested membership.

MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 1984

The Annual Meeting of OFF made some changes to the annual fees for 1984. The new rates are:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|------|---------|--|
| Single adult | | \$4.00 | |
| Family (at one address) | - | \$5.00 | |
| Concessional | - | \$2.00 | (This includes pensioners, students and corresponding members) |
| Life membership - Single | - | \$45.00 | |
| | Dual | - | \$60.00 |

Our Treasurer, Harry Whaite, will be pleased to receive your renewal at the 6th February meeting.

SECOND-HAND NATURE BOOKS. Do you have any books or journals on natural history/conservation topics lying around the house gathering dust? The Society intends to have a stall at the Pole Depot Market Day and we need as many books or magazines as you might be able to donate. Bring them along to the next meeting or ring Alan Fairley (597.1583) for collection.

A special word of thanks to Betty Weekes who has edited OFF News for so long. Betty has decided to step down from the job this year. The Committee and the Annual General Meeting recorded their appreciation for her efforts and I am sure all members will add their thanks for a newsletter which was always bright, informative and on time.

| | | |
|-----------------|--|----------|
| Hon. President: | John Blacker, 110 Woronora Pde., Oatley. 2223. | 579 5356 |
| Hon. Secretary: | June Underwood, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale. 2223. | 570 1149 |
| Hon. Editor: | Alan Fairley, P.O. Box 257, Kingsgrove. 2208. | 597 1583 |



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FEBRUARY/MARCH 1984

EDITORIAL: 'What can I do?' is a question often asked despairingly by conservationists when faced with impersonal bureaucracy, immovable local government and pragmatic politicians who care little about the natural environment. The individual can often feel that the task of getting sensible environmental policies is like trying to wear away stone with tear drops. But there is something simple everyone can do, something which past experience has proved very effective. This is to write a letter. This Society is continually writing letters to politicians and government departments expressing our views on issues which arise. These views are considerably strengthened when backed up by letters from individuals. We are often told that politicians take much more notice of letters from individual voters than from 'interest groups'.

A four year campaign of letter writing by OFF, the Nature Conservation Council and other groups has recently had some success over Macquarie Marshes. In 1980 the N.S.W. Water Resources Commission proposed a southern by-pass channel which would have reduced the flow of water into the Marshes and seriously affected the superb wetlands and the resident wildlife. For some years there has been conflict between those who want more water made available for crop irrigation and those who believe the water should be allocated for the maintenance of the wetlands which are of national significance.

The Society has recently (December 1983) received a letter from Mr. Paul Whelan, Minister for Water Resources, informing us of his decision 'to allocate 50,000 megalitres of water annually for the conservation of wildlife in the Marshes. This compares with the present wildlife allocation of 18,500 megalitres.' He also stated that agricultural activity which compromises the security and future of the Marshes will not be supported by the Wran government. On your behalf, the Committee has welcomed the Minister's decision.

We now call on the new Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr. Terry Sheehan, to (1) expedite the preparation of a Management Plan for the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve, and (2) acquire wetlands of value for addition to the Nature Reserve. Your letters to Mr. Sheehan in support of this action would help resolve this long-standing conflict.

Our first meeting for 1984 was a great success, with more than 50 people attending. Members' slides were a fascinating mixture of subjects from all over the world. There were photos from Cradle Mountain, Tasmania, by Gwen Helman; autumn in Japan by Betty Hall; natives of Sulawesi, Hindu religious festivals in Singapore, Australian wild flowers, and views of Rottneest Island. Ray Stokes showed some slides of OFF members on Kosciusko during the Summer Camp. The viewing finished in time for a talk over supper.

WE HAVE NOT INHERITED THE EARTH FROM OUR PARENTS, WE
HAVE BORROWED IT FOR OUR CHILDREN.

RESIDENT ACTION

In recent years we have seen the rise of Resident Action Groups who want a greater say in what happens to their local environment. These groups, although they have a narrow field of interest, are an important grass-roots part of the conservation movement.

Three issues have been getting publicity in recent weeks.

Quarry Reserve, Hurstville Grove

Quarry Reserve is a small open space bush area bounded by Hillcrest Avenue, Denman Street, Hurstville Road and Laycock Road. Part of it was a sandstone quarry and access to the reserve was blocked by gates and a fence some years ago as Kogarah Council felt the cliff was a danger to children. Although it has been neglected for years and privet and lantana are rife, many local people feel that it has tremendous potential for landscaping, considering the natural sloping contour of the land and the existing large eucalypts and coral trees. Many native birds visit the reserve.

Kogarah Council is now considering the development of the reserve; tennis courts and other sporting facilities are proposed. Jeff Angel of the Total Environment Centre considers the area worth preserving and a National Trust survey in 1979 recommended to the Council that the reserve be landscaped using native trees and shrubs. A residents' group known as the 'Residents for the Preservation of Quarry Reserve' has been formed. A recent meeting had 80 people attending and a Council meeting was packed. It seems incredible that in a suburb so short of passive recreational areas and bushland that the Council should be wanting more development against the residents' wishes.

Wolli Creek

Wolli Creek Valley contains the last vestige of natural bushland in the Cooks River system. It has been neglected for decades, partly because control is split between two local councils and various government departments, and partly because part has been reserved for a freeway. Canterbury Council has announced that it is to prepare a Local Environment Plan for the area of the Valley under its control.

At a special meeting arranged by the Wolli Creek and Bardwell Valley Preservation Society late last year, guest speaker, Milo Dunphy (Director of the Total Environment Centre), spoke on methods of formulating environmental management plans. He suggested the establishment of a Cooks River Trust to administer the river's open spaces. The meeting passed a resolution supporting this idea. Following the meeting, the Preservation Society requested Rockdale Council to co-operate with Canterbury Council in the preparation of a compatible Local Environment Plan to cover the area under its control. OFF members, especially those living in Rockdale Municipality, are urged to write to Rockdale Council supporting such a Plan.

Kellys Bush (Hunters Hill Council)

On 4th September, 1983, Mr. Wran announced that Kellys Bush will be set aside for full public access on a permanent basis, thus ending thirteen years of protest and conflict. Mr. Wran recognised that the decision 'represents a victory for environmentalists generally.' The bushland fronts Parramatta River and it is hoped that it will eventually become part of Sydney Harbour National Park.

Kellys Bush was the focus of a great deal of publicity in the 1970s when there was a strong local resident reaction to plans by A.V. Jennings and the Council to build townhouses on 6.5 acres of the bushland. The Battlers for Kellys Bush gained powerful support from the Trade Union movement who placed Green Bans on the site. Despite public meetings of 600 and more people and official recommendations that the area should 'be reserved as County Open Space as part of the overall plan to preserve the existing character of Hunters Hill,' Hunters Hill Council voted for the zoning to be made residential. In 1977, Mr. Wran announced that the Government was opposed to development and asked the Council to meet half the cost of acquisition. It now seems that the area is safe for the future.

SECOND-HAND NATURE BOOKS: Do you have any books or journals on natural history/conservation topics lying around the house gathering dust? The Society intends to have a stall at the Pole Depot Market Day in March and we need as many books or magazines as you might be able to donate. Bring them along to the next meeting (Feb. 27th) or ring Alan Fairley (597.1583) for collection.

A VISIT TO THE IRON RANGE- Mimi Godfrey

(The Iron Range is a low range near the sea, north-east of Coen on Cape York, Queensland.)

A waking chorus of white-faced robins, yellow orioles and magnificent rifle birds could surround us in one place only - the Iron Range. Our tents were pitched from the verge of the narrow dirt road into the encroaching rainforest. We were absorbed into the environment.

Endiandra longipedicillata hung myriads of tiny drooping brown flowers over the smorgasbord table. Across the road, a tall Syzygium bearing fluffy cream balls of flower and draped with a curtain of flaccid, white new leaves was a regular rendezvous for birds seeking insects and honey for their morning meal. At night a tiny mouse-like critter (Melomys, I was told) ran regularly across the outside walls of the tent, its scurrying feet only one of the many nocturnal sounds.

The camp site was on the bank of Scrubby Creek, a shallow free-running stream which, balancing on logs, we crossed on foot. Near the crossing was a dump of old drums and the remains of a wartime bridge. We used the stream for our drinking water as well as for bathing and laundry. On a short walk from the creek we found an enormous 4-metre high scrub fowl's mound; less impressive mounds were regularly scattered through the rainforest.

The smaller creeks, dry for the winter, made good walking tracks for enthusiastic bird watchers but, with care, the rainforest could be penetrated easily at any point. There were no introduced barrier weeds such as lantana; lawyer vines (Calamus) were the only hazard.

A walk along the road revealed a great diversity of plant life, two interesting species being Caryota rumphiana, a fish-tail palm native to Cape York, and a deciduous fig which, having cast its large leaves in a thick layer over the road, displayed clusters of figs growing on the reddish main trunk (known as 'cauliflory'). In the wetter areas, epiphytic ant plants (Myrmecodia antoinii) clung to tree branches. They resembled spiny cucumbers with a few leathery leaves sprouting from the apex. These chambered tubers house colonies of ants, Phedale myrmecodia, in a symbiotic relationship.

Another unusual plant, found in the swampy areas near Mt. Tozer, looping over the ground and climbing low shrubs on curled leaf tendrils, was the insectivorous pitcher plant, Nepenthes mirabilis.

It was a short run from our camp site to Mt. Tozer, a drier, more heathy area, where, from the summit, we admired the surrounding countryside. It was also a short run to Lockhart River Aborigine settlement, a neat well-laid out village, and, in the other direction, a short run to Portland Roads, once an important shipping port between Cooktown and Thursday Island. Portland Roads now consists of two houses, an expanse of mangroves and a monument to the explorer, Kennedy, who lost his life in the north. While driving to Portland Roads we were buzzed by a black palm cockatoo which flew across the road in front of the four-wheel drive. Another highlight of the trip was an amethyst python, caught by the boys and set free after we had admired it.

We spent five nights in the Iron Range. I found the days too short. By the time I had inspected all the flowering plants within walking distance, we were packing to leave. If I had had a few more days I would have been able to give more detailed attention to the birds.

Further to Mimi's article For some time Harry Whaite has been hoping to visit the Iron Range-Lockhart River area of Cape York Peninsula. He and Olive were unable to get there on their 1982 trip because of a number of factors. He has been in touch with Steve Trezise, son of Percy Trezise (the discoverer of the Quinkan Aboriginal paintings) with a view to arranging an examination of the area. Such a trip, covering about 10 days from Cairns back to Cairns, would not be cheap, particularly with air fares from Sydney. However, some members may be interested. If so, get in touch with Harry at 57 6459.

Incidentally, Harry will be showing slides of his and Olive's previous visit to Cape York at our July meeting.

COMING EVENTS

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February 27th (Monday). 7.45 p.m. N.S.W. WETLANDS. A talk and slides by Ron West of the N.S.W. Fisheries Department. The conservation of wetlands is becoming a major issue as they are increasingly polluted and drained. Hear an expert's view on the situation in this state.

March 3rd (Saturday). FORESHORES WALK, SYDNEY HARBOUR. This is a beauty! Walk along the tracks on the north side of the harbour from Bradleys Head and the Zoo. A very pleasant day. We are very lucky to have as the leader of this outing Alan Morris, Superintendent of Sydney Harbour National Park and an acknowledged expert on bird identification.

Train departs Oatley Station at 8.20 a.m. Change at Town Hall for train to Circular Quay. Catch Taronga Zoon ferry at 9.15. Meet at bus stop at Zoo wharf at 9.30 a.m.

5th (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. The first for the year. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beatty on 523 7458.

26th (Monday). 7.45 p.m. BEAUTIFUL BIRDS OF GALAPAGOS ISLANDS. An outstanding talk and slides by Walter Bolles of the Australian Museum.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Other conservation groups have organised some interesting activities which may be of interest to OFF members. Here are some which promise to be good.

March 7th (Wednesday). Sutherland Branch of National Parks Association. Slide-talk on KIMBERLEY ADVENTURE: A WESTERN WILDERNESS IN DANGER by David Turner of the Royal National Park. 8 p.m. Gynea Community Centre.

March 12th (Monday). National Parks Association. Talk by Harry Recher of the Australian Museum on his studies, WILDLIFE IN THE NATIVE FORESTS OF THE EDEN FORESTRY REGION. 8 p.m. GUOOF Building, Floor 7, 149 Castlereagh Street, City.

March 21st (Wednesday). Society for Growing Australian Plants (Sutherland). SOILS AND POTTING MIXES. Speaker from the Ryde School of Horticulture. 8 p.m. Gynea Community Centre.

This year's N.P.A. lecture series is FLORA OF THE SYDNEY BASIN. Eight lectures and six field trips. Cost for the lectures is \$25 for the eight. Phone Mrs. Heather Roy (918 9259) for details.

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| Family (at one address) | - | \$5.00 | |
| Concessional | - | \$2.00 | (This includes pensioners, students and corresponding members) |
| Life membership - Single | - | \$45.00 | |
| - Dual | - | \$60.00 | |

Our Treasurer, Harry Whaite, will be pleased to receive your renewal at the 27th February meeting, or post your cheque to the Hon. Secretary.

Hon. President: John Blacker, 110 Woronora Pde., Oatley. 2223. 579 5356
 Hon. Secretary: June Underwood, P.O. Box 52, Mortdale. 2223. 570 1149
 Hon. Editor: Alan Fairley, P.O. Box 257, Kingsgrove. 2208. 597 1583



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MARCH/APRIL 1984

EDITORIAL: The year has begun well for the Society. Over 50 people attended our last meeting to hear Ron West of the Fisheries Department tell us about what is happening to N.S.W. estuaries and 70 or more were on the foreshores walk around Sydney Harbour. Harry Whaite reports that membership renewals are up when compared to this time last year. An active membership is essential for a healthy Society, and we are fortunate to have one of the keenest memberships in Sydney. But we must not rest on our laurels. There is much to be done, and an increased membership will provide the funds and the man-power (or person-power?) to better achieve our aims. Everyone can help by encouraging friends to come to meetings and activities and to join the Society. The program this year is full of high points which members would not wish to miss, so it should be easy to attract friends along as well.

N.S.W. ESTUARIES

Attitudes to coastal wetlands and estuaries have changed considerably over the last decade, and there is a greater awareness of their value by the public and government bodies. But we all know what effects uncontrolled development is having on wetlands all along the coast and the lack of balance between growth and nature preservation. At our last meeting, Ron West of the NSW Fisheries Department spoke about some of these problems. Here is a summary of that talk:-

Estuarine wet-lands are most important to the ecology and are especially valuable as fish nurseries. Sea-grasses, such as *Zostera* and *Posidonia*, contribute large amounts of organic matter to the food chain and are a vital habitat for young fish, prawns and crabs to shelter from predators. Sea-grasses produce up to 20 tonnes of leaf litter per acre per year. Mangroves also add to the nutrient chain with 10 tonnes of leaf debris a year. Their roots and breathing-tubes provide food and shelter for fish, which in turn attract many water birds. Studies in Botany Bay have shown that juvenile leatherjackets, flathead and other fish depend totally on *Zostera* beds; as they grow they move to the *Posidonia* beds, thus completing their whole life cycle in sea-grass beds. Other fish, such as blackfish, live in mangroves and sea-grasses when young, but move to other areas of the Bay to spawn. The sea-mullet, one of the most important commercial fishes, spawns out at sea, but the young come into the estuaries to shelter in the mangroves; when larger they swim up the rivers, then leave for the sea again. The Fisheries study showed that about two-thirds of all fish caught in the Bay were juveniles and that the sea-grasses were the most important habitat in the Bay.

The pressures on estuaries are from many sources. Mr. West showed slides of the damage done by pleasure boats which drag their anchors in the sea-grass beds; of land and canal developments which increase silt, nutrients and pollution; of the dumping of waste, building of levee banks and 'public' works which change the flow of salt water into the estuaries, and cause silt to cover the breathing tubes of the mangroves.

The Fisheries Department is currently drawing up an inventory of coastal wet-lands. The project is to map all the estuaries in NSW by use of aerial photography and follow-up fieldwork. Maps are then produced showing the most important areas for preservation so that local councils can take them into consideration in their Local Environmental Plans. Zone 7B is a protection zone, where development can only take place after an Environmental Impact Statement. (Ed. - the Fisheries Department has no power to force local councils to protect these vital natural areas. Conservation-ists must be on guard continually to make sure important wet-lands are not ruined. Should any threat come to your notice, report it to the Coastal Conservation Committee of the National Trust.)

Fisheries is also experimenting with the transplanting of mangroves and sea-grasses. Sea-grass restoration is being tried in Botany Bay, where redirected wave energies caused by harbour works have destroyed large areas of sea-grass around Towra Point. Copies of the pamphlet, Guide to Mangrove Transplanting, were given to the Society for use by members.

URANIUM POLICY

From time to time the Society receives requests for its backing of an anti-uranium/non-nuclear policy by various interest groups and individuals. At our last Annual General Meeting it was decided to develop a policy on this matter which would be presented to members for comment before adoption. The matter is a complex one, in which emotions run high. It is also very technical. Questions which arise include: Is there a link between uranium mining and atomic weapon manufacture? Should we allow existing uranium mines to operate, but to oppose any extension? If uranium mining is stopped in Australia, will it make any difference in the world situation? Is nuclear power the clean and cost-efficient power as is claimed? What about uranium for medical purposes? Is there a satisfactory means of waste disposal?

At the end of February, the Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W. held a meeting to develop their policy on uranium. O.F.F. was invited to send representatives. A lot of homework was done by our representatives so they could contribute constructively to this meeting and a draft policy was formed. The outcome of the NCC meeting was a policy which went beyond our ideas, and which will be presented to OFF for discussion and adoption in the near future. We intend to print the NCC policy in the next newsletter, but to get you thinking, the Society's draft policy is printed below for your information and comment.

PROPOSED POLICY ON THE URANIUM INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA

O.F.F. opposes the extension of the uranium industry in Australia on the grounds of:

1. Doubtful market. The overseas market for uranium is doubtful. Projections suggest that a substantial proportion of Australia's uranium production in the 1980s will remain unsold. World production now exceeds demand by 50%. The excess is stockpiled.
2. Uneconomical. To date, uranium has proved to be uneconomical as a source of energy. USA has closed 10 plants permanently and cancelled 97 orders. Sweden has cut back plans for new plants and voted to abandon use of uranium by 2010.
3. Alternative sources of energy. Australia has plenty of coal. We should be using coal while concentrating on wind, tidal and solar power for the future.
4. Conservation of energy. By not developing our uranium, we are conserving a vital energy source for the future when problems may have been solved.
5. Nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons can be produced during the fission process of uranium. Although the super powers have all the uranium they need, we may be contributing to the proliferation of nuclear weapons by lesser nations.
6. Waste disposal. This problem has not been satisfactorily solved. Prof. Ringwood's synroc looks hopeful but has not been proved.

The Society recognises that uranium is needed at Lucas Heights for medical purposes and that Australia has at least two contracts for the supply of uranium to overseas power plants. Should Australia stop mining? There is plenty of uranium available from other markets.

Your comments on this policy are invited. Send them to the Hon. Secretary.

KOSCIUSKO SUMMER SCHOOL

A number of OFF members attended the Kosciusko Summer School in January. Here are some impressions from Betty Weekes.

KOSCIUSKO! The craggy rocks of a worn-down mountain range stand out against the sky, for this is the highest one can go in Australia, even though it is not so very high by comparison with other countries. Yet here man is dwarfed by the immensity of the sky and the gulfs which separate the surrounding mountain tops, while the rock-strewn slopes covered with tough mountain grasses seem a totally alien world from

the sheltered valleys lower down. The barren loneliness of the landscape is awesome. Even the unremitting wind seems to be inimical as it blows away the words from one's mouth, and tears at the vegetation clinging to the slopes, a foretaste of the bitter savagery which is unleashed in winter. The low-growing alpine flowers shake and bend in united compliance with the wind's onrush - life is short here for the craspedia, celmisia, tiny violets and others which must grow leaves, flower and seed before the snow and ice smother them; but at least they have now been saved from the fate of disappearing forever into the maw of a summer-pasturing cow. Some species of plants, thought to have given up the struggle for survival, are now regenerating satisfactorily, among them the mountain celery (Aciphylla glacialis).

Once these alpine areas were, in summer, the province of those with leases for grazing, and intrepid bushwalking parties, but now family groups, young couples, old couples, joggers and study groups such as ours are taking full advantage of the chairlift from Thredbo to Crackenback, which makes a walk to the summit of "Kossi" an adventure within reach of all.

At the commencement of the Summer School the organisers had already allotted us to Group 1, 2 or 3 (roughly 30 to a group) with each group doing a different field trip on each of 3 afternoons with those mornings spent in the Memorial Hall at Jindabyne with lectures, slides and lunch taking from 9 a.m. or so until 1.30 p.m. There were two all-day bus excursions - one to Kosciusko and the Lakes Walk and the other to Yarrangobilly Caves.

Our group's field trip to Charlotte's Pass was on a sunny summery afternoon, with a profusion of flowers such as mountain prostanthera scenting the air, large pimeloa with dark red bracts, clumps of euphrasia and many others which we knew in their coastal form. The following day was cloudy, much more humid, presaging rain; in fact it did rain a bit and there were not many birds in evidence. However, an echidna obligingly (?) appeared, likewise a copperhead snake (less obviously obliging - in fact it was startled out of hiding by heavy feet nearby) but, caught in expert snake-catching fashion by one of the young Queenslanders, had to submit to the avid attentions of the "shutterbugs" before being released. Apart from these excitements, we were shown the differences in a number of mountain crickets and grasshoppers, one of which had no wings, it was said, so it would be less likely to be blown off the mountain. One of our guides, from the NPWS pulled aside the bosseae bushes to reveal the habitat of different types of rodent, something we should never have guessed. Our geology trip was literally a washout, after a night and morning of rain, but instead we went up to the Information Centre at Sawpit Creek for a film and saw displays of birds and animals of the region and a reconstruction of the inside of a stockman's hut. Books, posters, postcards and pictures were for sale and it was about our only opportunity to visit the Centre, as the school ran on a fairly taut schedule, good in a way, but not much time allowed for dawdling. We had one free night, which was after the Long Walk ended in the teaming rain at Charlotte's Pass where the buses were waiting to pick us up, and as it was so late, Les and I treated ourselves to a luxurious take-away meal of fish, chips and salad, most thankful for having a watertight van around us.

The Kosciusko Summer School has been an unforgettable experience, with something for all nature lovers, and I would thoroughly recommend anyone to apply without delay if/when it is announced again.

PREPLAN is a word we shall hear frequently in the future, according to Andrew Bond who lectured on Park Management at the January school in Jindabyne.

PREPLAN is a pocket-sized, Natural Area Modelling, Management and Planning computerised tool, designed for, and implemented in Kosciusko National Park in 1979. It helps to predict outcomes of various actions such as prescribed burning, before the decisions to act are made. It has been used now by the Park managers for over three years with a high degree of confidence. The cost is less than \$1000, and one is now being designed for the Royal National Park.

One wonders if, in the future, a PREPLAN might be programmed for fire management in urban bushlands.

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held in the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

March 26th (Monday). 7.45 p.m. The birds of the Galapagos played an important part in the formulation of theories on evolution and natural selection by Charles Darwin. Walter Bolles of the Australian Museum will give a talk and show slides on the BIRDS OF GALAPAGOS ISLANDS. Another outstanding activity - and it's free!!

31st (Saturday). Another opportunity to see some beauty spots of Sydney Harbour. A short walk and picnic at NIELSEN PARK, with a visit to historic Vaucluse House and Greycliffe House (restored as head-quarters of Sydney Harbour National Park). Those going by car, meet at the entrance to Nielsen Park at 10 a.m. Those wishing to go by public transport, meet Harry Whaite at Oatley Station to catch the 8.20 a.m. train to Edgecliff. Harry intends to take a bus from there to Hermitage Reserve (which has been in the news lately); after a short walk in this Reserve, his party will join the others at Nielsen Park before lunch.

April 2nd (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beatty on 523 7458.

28th (Saturday). Keep this day free on your diary for Ray and Betty Stokes's bird walk on Curra Moors.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES. The Australian Conservation Foundation has notified us of these coming events:

Sunday, 8th April - Sydney Harbour and Parramatta River Foreshores Inspection, Boat Cruise, 9.15 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Tickets are \$11 and must be obtained in advance. Ring Mrs. Fay Sutton, 665 2869, for details.

Thursday, 22nd April - Talk at Hallstrom Theatre, Australian Museum, 7 p.m. Topic: WETLANDS-USELESS SWAMP OR HERITAGE (Dr. Paul Adams) and A PLEA FOR TWO MARINE RESERVES IN W.A. (Dr. A. Ivanovici).

Volunteers needed!!!! To help staff the ACF stand at the Royal Easter Show, 13th to 24th April. If able to assist for a half or full day, ring Fay Sutton, 665 2869.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Society receives a regular supply of papers, journals and reports which may be of interest to members. They can be borrowed from Betty Hall, our librarian, at the meetings. Some of the latest to arrive are:

Urban Bushland Management and Fire Protection, a Report by the Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W. (April 1983).

Environmental Impact of Bushfires, a Submission to an enquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation, by N.C.C., National Trust and Colong Committee. (July 1983).

Address to the Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W. by Mr. Nick Greiner, M.P., Liberal Party leader (October 1983).

Wildlife Australia (December 1983). Contains articles on 'Values of our Tropical Rainforests', Kakadu', 'Australian Crocodiles', and 'Wildlife in the Cities'.

You are invited to contribute to OFF News. Letters and articles of up to 600 words are welcome. If you have enjoyed a good OFF field day, why not put your feelings on paper so other members can share that pleasure?

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STOP PRESS: Telegram received from Milo Dunphy, Director, Total Environment Centre, asking that members be alerted to policy announcements by National/Liberal party coalition leaders to remove areas from existing national parks for logging. "Punch last year gave 'firm undertaking that if we are returned to power Washpool will be re-opened to the timber industry.' He also promises to stop further land acquisition by Parks Service and recommence beach mining. Both Messrs. Punch and Greiner voted to disallow Goulburn River National Park. These coalition policies threaten many recent gains by the environment movement. Full documentation available." (from the Total Environment Centre).



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O.F.F. NEWS

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OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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APRIL/MAY 1984

EDITORIAL: Post-election thoughts. Regardless of the party politics of individual members, most conservation societies (including O.F.F.) are careful to take a non-political stand. This enables them to judge the performance and promises of all political parties and to comment and criticise where appropriate. In recent times we have been critical of the Federal Labor Party's uranium policy, the Tasmanian Liberal's wilderness policy, the Queensland National Party's attitude to rainforest, Victoria's Labor Government's continued logging of the Errinundra Plateau, and the failure of the N.S.W. Labor Government to preserve the historic Rural Bank building in Martin Place and to produce an effective policy to stop vehicles ruining our beaches.

It is inevitable that at times we will be highly critical of the actions of Governments or Oppositions and this will upset some members who hold contrary views. Some people have even resigned from this and other organizations because of what they perceived as a politically motivated campaign. But for most committed conservationists the aims of our society are above politics and we must be free to take a stand against the pragmatic and often ill-advised policies of political parties.

Although the rainforest issue did not get much media coverage in the recent State elections, it weighed heavily on the minds of many people. The statement by Mr. Punch, leader of the State National Party, that "if we are returned to power Washpool will be re-opened to the timber industry" may have gained some votes around Grafton, but it struck a note of fear in the hearts of conservationists all over the state. A change of government threatened the success of the rainforest campaign after so many years of struggle. The Liberal Party's advertisements stating that "Rainforests are here to stay" did little to inspire confidence. The picture used in these advertisements was not a rainforest scene but a mountain ash (Eucalyptus regnans) forest from Victoria.

Mr. Wran's personal prestige may have declined somewhat, but his conservation record (with a few exceptions) has to be admired. Many conservationists would agree with his own assessment of his Government's performance made in 1983:

"When we're all dead and buried and our children's children are reflecting upon what was the best thing the Labor Government in N.S.W. did in the 20th century, they'll all come up with the answer that we saved the rainforest."

WALKING FOR PLEASURE - FOR SENIOR ADULTS: The Department of Leisure, Sport and Tourism (Hurstville Branch) has organized a series of nature walks in our area. These are short (1 to 2 km) and accompanied by a guide. If interested, contact the Department at 45 Forest Road, Hurstville, or ring Julie Garradd on 588 5055. A 'Walking for Pleasure' handbook is also available.

LUCAS HEIGHTS INSPECTION. Ida Carder would like to hear from anyone interested in an inspection tour of the Lucas Heights reactor at Menai. It is only open for inspection during the week, not at weekends. Ring Ida on 57 5909.

GOOD ATTENDANCE AT MARCH MEETING. The high quality of our speakers continued at our March meeting. Over 50 members and friends enjoyed an excellent set of slides on the Galapagos Islands. The slides were accompanied by a well-informed talk on the curious animals of the islands. These included lizards which swim and eat seaweed, tortoises whose shells vary from island to island, and a wonderful array of endemic birds.

REPORT ON TRIP TO NIELSEN PARK by Harry Whaite

Twenty-seven members of O.F.F. elected to use the public transport and follow the writer into the Hermitage Reserve. He had been told that the new track was good and level, but our initial encounter dispelled that belief. Further, short sections were still muddy from the recent rains. However, despite lack of sign posting at crucial points, we reached Nielsen Park 1½ hours after leaving the bus without the loss of a single person. Given fine weather, the views up-harbour are magnificent and this short walk is highly recommended.

After an early lunch, five members walked back through the Hermitage Reserve. Not unexpectedly, the journey took less time and the track proved easier to follow. Meanwhile, most of the party walked around the headland under Val Boyan's guidance, then visited Vacluse House. Initially the site of this historic building was occupied by a small cottage built by a transportee, Sir Henry Browne Hayes, in 1803. It was subsequently added to and, in 1827, bought by W.C. Wentworth for 1500 pounds. In 1910, it was sold to the N.S.W. Government, and a Board of Trustees appointed in 1917. Since 1980 it has been administered by the Historic Houses Trust of N.S.W. An historic event occurred during our visit - two of our ladies were asked to leave the front verandah because, being in their walking clothes, it was alleged that they made the verandah untidy!!

Greycliffe House, the future N.P.W.S. headquarters for the Sydney Harbour National Park, was being renovated so it could not be inspected. It was built in 1852 for a son-in-law of W.C. Wentworth and stands on a rise behind Nielsen Park.

This outing was more urban than most Society trips, but was enjoyed by all. Those of our readers who did not participate, and who feel like subscribing to the conservation ethic by leaving the car at home and catching public transport, can obtain details and information concerning buses and trains from the writer.

URANIUM POLICY

In last O.F.F. News we reported that the Nature Conservation Council was in the process of forming appolicy on uranium. This Society has now received that policy. It is too long for inclusion in this newsletter, so it will be summarised for next month's newsletter.

DAINTREE DAY

The Sydney Branch of the Wilderness Society is organizing a special rally on the 28th April in the south-east section of Hyde Park. The aim of the day is to provide a public focus on the Greater Daintree campaign. There will be speakers, and entertainment such as bands, dancers and theatre groups. The Greater Daintree area of North Queensland is of enormous importance as it is the last remaining lowland rainforest in tropical Australia. It is the only coastal wilderness left and is the only place where the fringing reef (just metres offshore) is still undamaged from siltation and development. There are real threats to this area - the current one being the road being built from Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield. Conservationists have only a little time. The wet season has halted the council's work on the road, but only until about May. Your support is needed!! Attend the special rally or make a donation to the Daintree Rainforest Campaign, through the Wilderness Society (N.S.W.), 362 Pitt Street, Sydney, 2000! Ring Jo Clayton for details on 267 7929.

N.S.W. RAINFOREST

The Government announced on the 24th January 1984 more additions to our rainforest national parks. This means that the Wran Government has in effect saved the N.S.W. rainforests. Of an estimated 192,000 ha of rainforest which still remain structurally unchanged in N.S.W., about 46% is now protected in national parks and reserves. Significant additions to the national park estate include 30,000 ha of Border Ranges National Park, 27,700 ha of Washpool National Park, and 22,300 ha addition to Barrington Tops National Park.

ERRINUNDRA PLATEAU

When I was in Melbourne in January this year, the T.V. news and newspapers were full of reports about the 'greenies vs the loggers' on a remote plateau in East Gippsland. The plateau contains magnificent tall eucalypt forests dominated by Shining Gums (*Eucalyptus nitens*) and extensive stands of mountain cool temperate rainforest dominated by Southern Sassafras and Blackwood. The Victorian Land Conservation Council (a government body) is currently studying East Gippsland and it seems strange that the Victorian Government should support the loggers and thus pre-empt any report by the L.C.C. which may recommend that the area be protected.

In late February 1984, over 300 biological and environmental scientists signed a statement which was published in The Age calling on the Victorian Government to redirect forestry operations away from the Errinundra Plateau pending the outcome of the enquiry. They stated that the Plateau and its escarpment are recognised as areas of unique beauty and outstanding biological significance, and worthy of inclusion in the register of the National Estate. They believe that alternative timber supplies are available nearby in less sensitive areas to sustain the timber industry until a review is completed.

Society members, Gordon and Estelle Geering, recently received a letter from their daughter, Katrina, giving a more personal insight into the area:

'On Monday night we went to a talk on the Errinundra Plateau. I had heard a lot about the Plateau from my biogeographer friends in Canberra, so I realised that behind all the media dis-information were very good reasons for some reserves to be unlogged on Errinundra.

It is even more fantastic than I had realised. I knew there were 10 metre high podocarps (small shrubs everywhere else in Australia) and rainforest jungles. These, however, are mature rainforest understorey with mature eucalypt dominants ... a unique and somewhat unlikely situation given the definition of a rainforest. In fact, this is part of the reason why forestry in Victoria fails to acknowledge its existence. There are also massive pure eucalypt stands, groves of tree podocarps, groves of sassafras, with most species reaching 3 to 4 times the size they do elsewhere.

The man who has been working on the area for years providing information to Forestry, and who originally worked for them, has asked for only about 4% of the entire plateau to be unlogged ... hardly an exorbitant claim.

It is a pity the press mishandled the fuss over the plateau so badly. The average person has no idea why the area is so special, nor of the small claims for a reserve. Anyway, a group of botanists, geologists and geographers is going up to the Plateau at Easter as a show of interest from the scientific community. It looks as if our trip to Byadbo will be sacrificed for a trip to Errinundra. As there are 90+ inches of rainfall, the mushroom flora should be very interesting.'

CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

The Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers has been operating in Victoria since 1981 and is trying to establish a N.S.W. division. It works on the principle that there are many students and adults who are prepared to do physical work to benefit the environment, but for which governments will never find sufficient money. A.T.C.V. aims to organise groups of volunteers to assist landholders, including the National Parks Service, National Trust, Municipal Councils, etc. in labour intensive conservation tasks which are not commercially viable. Last year in Victoria, tasks included tree planting, maintenance of walking trails, erosion control, weed control by the Bradley Method, maintenance of Heritage List buildings and the establishment and repair of wildlife habitats. Volunteers pay most of their transport costs and contribute to costs of food, and the landholder arranges accommodation, usually in woolsheds, local halls or camping grounds, and makes a small contribution per volunteer-day to A.T.C.V. Further information can be obtained from Alex Tucker on 451 4028 (after hours).

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

April 28th (Saturday). A walk on the Curra Moors in the Royal National Park with Ray and Betty Stokes. Autumn is a very pleasant time to walk and the Curra Moors are beautiful at this time of the year. Betty and Ray have a lot of knowledge of the birds of the area, so bring your binoculars. There are always some flowers to be seen and the mallee eucalypts are in bud and flowering at this time of year. It is a whole day walk, but the grade is easy as the Moors are fairly flat. Lunch will be at Curracurrong, where a waterfall drops over vertical sandstone cliffs into the sea. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Curra Moors parking area on Bertram Stevens Drive. Coming from Audley, this is 4.1 km past the Wattamolla turn-off; coming from Waterfall, it is 1.1 km past the Garie turn-off.

April 30th (Monday). Evelyn Crawford is well known in the National Parks Service for her expertise in the field of aboriginal relics. Her topic on this night will be ABORIGINAL RELICS AND ROCK CARVINGS. There is a growing Aboriginal movement to re-possess many of the traditional sites and to remove relics and artifacts from present collections. Come along and hear the latest from an acknowledged expert and bring a friend or two. 7.45 p.m.

May 8th (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beatty on 523 7458.

May 28th (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Slides and talk on FORESTS by a representative of the Forests Commission. Details in next month's newsletter.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Wednesday, May 2nd - Sutherland Sub-Group of National Parks Association. 'The Preservation of Endangered Species.' 8 p.m. at Gynea Community Centre, Gynea Bay Road.

Tuesday, 15th May - Australian Conservation Foundation. 'Uranium and Roxby Downs - the Development Dilemma.' 7 p.m., Hallstrom Theatre, Australian Museum, William Street, Sydney.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Society receives a regular supply of papers, journals and reports which may be of interest to members. They can be borrowed from Betty Hall, our librarian, at the meeting. Some of the latest to arrive are:

In Search of the Cobrakall. A Survey of Aboriginal Sites in the Campbelltown area. The Sydney Prehistory Group and N.P.W.S. A detailed survey of an area within the Holsworthy Military Reserve, including vegetation, fauna and geology, with a list of plants used by Aborigines. Donated by Charles Geeson, a Society member and one of the researchers.

Water Planning for New South Wales. Water Resources Commission. A glossy publication setting out the government's views on planning for future water needs in N.S.W.

Ecology, Autumn 1984. Articles on solar farms, the atmosphere after a nuclear attack, and sea plankton.

Marine and Estuarine Reserves in Australia. Dr. Keith Suter and the Fund for Animals. A detailed 50-page booklet setting out the need for joint co-operation between Federal and State Governments in the establishment of marine reserves.

Wildlife Australia. Autumn 1984. Includes articles on the Australian Bird Atlas, Gammon Ranges National Park in South Australia, the yellow-footed rock-wallaby, reptiles in South Australia and what is happening in the Daintree area and Cape Tribulation in Queensland.

You are invited to contribute to O.F.F. News. Letters and articles of up to 600 words are welcome. If you have enjoyed a good O.F.F. field day, why not put your feelings on paper so other members can share that pleasure?

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MAY/JUNE 1984

THE SAD STATE OF WESTERN LANDS: Conservationists have been concerned for some years about the administration of the semi-arid Western Lands Division which covers about 40 per cent of this State. Poor land management has led to loss of vegetation cover, massive soil erosion and subsequent dust storms. A recent State parliamentary committee has backed this concern (reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, 30th March, 1984). The main problems are related to the need for landholders to try to make a decent living on properties which are too small and where their leases are not really economically viable. This means that there are strong pressures to overstock sheep and to clear more land to put in crops. Add to this the inadequate control of noxious animals such as pigs and rabbits, and it is obvious that the Western Lands are facing an environmental crisis.

The Nature Conservation Council has consistently opposed the unlimited clearing of marginal rural land in the west. It has called on members of conservation societies to take the following action:

- * Write to Mr. Wran supporting a moratorium of any further clearing in the Western Division, at least until the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee has been released and discussed.
- * Write to the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Hallam, expressing concern at the continued unwise clearing in N.S.W., and urging him to appoint a representative of nature conservation interests to both the Catchment Areas Protection Board, and the working party looking at land clearing in N.S.W.

Further information on these points can be obtained from Roger Lembit of the Nature Conservation Council, telephone 267 7519.

CURRA MOORS OUTING: Betty and Ray Stokes had chosen a beautiful sunny day for their bird-watching walk on the Curra Moors, Royal National Park. Forty-two (or was it forty-one) walkers followed the leaders in a long line, which at times seemed to stretch like an elongated caterpillar across the Moors. Autumn is a beautiful time on these open heaths. The air is so crisp and clear. A light breeze kept the temperature down and blew away the haze and smog so Wollongong and Port Kembla could be clearly seen to the south. The heath's flowers are at their best in spring, but autumn has its highlights also. The Banksias were especially colourful. There were long orange flower-spikes of Banksia ericifolia, small yellow spikes of B. marginata, the green spikes of B. oblongifolia and the delicate lime-coloured spikes of B. serrata. Everyone noticed the yellow pea-flower, Bossiaea heterophylla, and Leucopogons, Cryptandras and Hibbertias were common. There were even a few early spring flowers, such as Eriostemon buxifolius. The mallees were all heavily in bud.

Lunch was at Curracurrong where the creek falls over the sheer sandstone cliff into the sea. Standing on Eagle Rock which juts out from the cliff edge, we could look down to the base of the falls where the surf foamed into a narrow crevice and crashed against the rocks. The return walk was south along the top of this spectacular cliff-line, then again over the Moors to rejoin the main track back to the car park.

A bird list for the Curra Moors Track, i.e. birds seen or heard on the field day, on 28th April, 1984, was supplied by Betty Stokes: Brown Thornbill, White-browed Scrub-wren, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Little Wattle-bird, Mistletoe Bird, Whip-bird, Raven, Rock Warbler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Butcher-bird, Crimson Rosella, Welcome Swallow, Silver Gull, Gannet, Lyrebird, White-bellied Sea-eagle.

COMING EVENTS:

All meetings are held in the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

May 28th (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Dick Turner of the Forestry Commission will show slides and talk about 'OUR FORESTS'. The Forestry Commission has come in for a lot of criticism in recent years because of their blinkered attitude towards rainforest logging, their clearing of native forests for pine plantations and clear-felling process of logging for wood chip in the Eden district. Come along and find out what the Forestry Commission is doing to protect our forests for future use and what is its attitude to conservation.

June 2nd (Saturday). WALK IN THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK. Waterfall, Uloola Falls, Karloo Pool, Heathcote. Leader: Betty Hall. 579 1703. Walking time: about 4½ hours plus a stop for lunch and a few short rests. The walk to Uloola Falls is fairly level along a good track which follows Uloola Creek past a large swamp along the edge of a creek where there are some Aboriginal engravings, to the 18 metre high Uloola Falls. Lunch will be at Uloola Falls and those who wish to may then make their own way back to Waterfall at their own pace. Betty will be going on to Karloo Pool and Heathcote. This involves two fairly steep climbs and a little scrambling but nothing difficult. (Rubber-soled shoes or boots and a pack are needed.) Those who wish to bring their cars and do the whole walk should park at Heathcote and catch the 9.48 a.m. train from there to Waterfall. Bring lunch and your own drinks. No fires allowed.

Meeting place: Waterfall Station (National Park side) - 10 a.m.

June 4th (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

June 30th (Saturday). Book now for the next bus trip!! Bus to Bouddi National Park, near Gosford. Walk led by Harry Whaite. Cost - \$8.50. Contact Val Boyan, 533 1013 after 4 p.m.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

May 29th (Tuesday) 8 p.m. - PUBLIC MEETING sponsored by the Australian Conservation Foundation to increase public awareness of ANTARCTICA. Should Antarctica be exploited for its living and mineral resources or preserved forever as a wilderness continent? Film: 'Antarctic Adventure' showing the beauty and majesty of this region, followed by slides and talk by Dr. Keith Suter. No admission charge. Hallstrom Theatre at Museum, William Street, City.

Sunday 26th August - Friday 31st August. Conference on URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION at University of Sydney. Opened by the Prime Minister, the Hon. R. Hawke. Keynote speaker, Chris Webb, of London, Consultant to the E.E.C. Registration fee: \$15 a day, \$75 for week. Further information and pamphlet from Di Collins, 266 0661.

WOLLI CREEK RESERVE

Work has begun on Canterbury Council's long-range plan to transform the western side of Wolli Creek valley, off Hartill-Law Avenue, Bardwell Park. The plans include: the creation of ponds with rocky cascades leading to Wolli Creek; planting of over 2000 native trees, shrubs and creepers; the establishment of picnic areas and walking trails; the rehabilitation of natural features and landscaping of the lower section of the park. All exotic woody weeds, such as privet, will be removed and an existing fern gully will be rehabilitated.

ABORIGINAL RELICS

Evelyn Crawford of the National Parks and Wildlife Service addressed our last meeting and showed slides of the different types of Aboriginal relics found in N.S.W. The 45 members present heard an excellent talk. Some of the unusual relics include stone arrangements, carved trees, burial sites at Mungo National Park, ochre quarries, stone axe quarries and stone fish traps.

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JUNE/JULY 1984

EDITORIAL. FORESTRY MATTERS dominate O.F.F. News this month.

The Forestry Commission of N.S.W. has come in for a great deal of criticism over the last few years because of its inflexible attitude to rainforest preservation and its policy of clearing native forests for exotic pine plantations. When the Wran government withdrew a number of areas of North Coast rainforest from State Forests and declared them National Parks, it was a major reversal of policy which was a stunning rebuff to the Forestry Commission and a victory for conservation. During the May school holidays, Chiew and I took the opportunity to visit some of these new rainforest parks. We inspected Nightcap, Border Ranges, Washpool and Woko National Parks - all beautiful areas with so much to offer the visitor. If you are looking for somewhere for your next holiday, why not try the new North Coast parks? The National Parks and Wildlife Service, (P.O. Box 91, Alstonville. 2477), have free pamphlets and information. Over the page is a list of a few of the highlights of these parks.

MT. WERONG. The Mt. Werong area is in the south-western part of the Blue Mountains. It is the centre of a dispute between the Forestry Commission and conservationists. It is feared bulldozers are being prepared to clear-fell the native hardwood forests for the planting of pines. A discussion of the value of this area and the threats to it, can be found in the latest copy of The Colong Bulletin, (May 1984), available from the Journals box at our meeting. Everyone is urged to read this article, and to write to the Premier asking him to dedicate the Mt. Werong area as National Park.

LAST MEETING. With forestry issues being so dominant, it was a fortunate coincidence that our last meeting's guest speaker was from the Forestry Commission. For Dick Turner, it was rather like stepping into the lion's den, but after presenting a factual and reasoned (if one-sided) case for the forestry industry, Mr. Turner was allowed to escape relatively unruffled. Members' questions about the use of fire as a management tool, clear-felling and wood chipping and pine plantation policies, were answered honestly and even though everyone did not accept all the rationale, no-one doubted Mr. Turner's sincerity. Most members attending agreed it was an interesting talk and it was good to hear the views of an organisation with which we are so often in disagreement.

FORESTRY TODAY

Dick Turner began his talk with some statistics on N.S.W. forests. He said that 20% of the State (16 million hectares) has forest cover. Of this, 3.5 million ha is in State Forests, including 40000 ha in special reserves. There are 150000 ha of radiata pine forests. In comparison, Japan has 60% under forest, Germany 25% and Canada 40%. Each person in this state uses an average of one cubic metre of timber each year. This results in a shortfall of timber amounting to \$300 million which is made up by imports from overseas. Oregon and Pacific Maple are two timbers in demand. He predicted that, because of past planting and regeneration policies and the slow-growing nature of our main building timbers, there will be a shortfall of timber in N.S.W. for the next 20 years. The present plan is to plant 5000 ha of radiata pine each year; this tree, originally from a limited area on the Californian coast, takes 40 years to mature, although it can be used before this.

Mr. Turner also outlined the many roles of the Forestry Commission. Five nurseries grow pine seedlings for private plantations. Other nurseries produce shrubs and trees for windbreaks and general sale. Lopped branches of pines are delivered to the cities for sale as Christmas trees. The Commission controls over 16000 km of roads, and has a large fire fighting unit. In 1980-81, an estimated 1.2 million

people visited State Forests, and walking tracks and picnic facilities have to be maintained. Research is also carried out on wood preservation, glues, seasoning, the most productive growing techniques and on the wildlife of the forests.

Various maps and publications were shown. Most of these are available free of charge from the Forestry Commission, 95 York Street, Sydney. The following may be of special interest to members:

- Information Kit: contains many useful information sheets; good for schools and projects. Sheets include What is a Tree?; Rainforest; Trees of the Sydney Area; Red Cedar; Forest Fire; Radiata Pine. A copy of this kit may be viewed at O.F.F. club nights.
- Forestry and Timber (July 1983). This edition of the Commission's magazine concentrates on wildlife, with articles on bird communities and the effect of logging; Hastings River rat; dieback and its effect on wildlife and the Rufous Scrub Bird.

SOME NEW NATIONAL PARKS

Nightcap is a rainforest-covered range north of Lismore, near Nimbin. Good roads lead to high points where there are lookouts over the Richmond and Tweed Valleys. There are extensive walking tracks through the rainforest, including the historic Nightcap Track, along which the mail used to pass in the days when it took three days to travel by horse from Murwillumbah to Lismore. This Park protects the headwaters of Terania Creek, the site of the famous Terania Creek protests which brought the rainforest issue to the public's attention. The camping ground at Nimbin is a good base from which to explore the area.

Border Ranges is a national park of over 30000 hectares. It is a wonderful area. A circular scenic forestry road takes you through subtropical forests close to the Queensland border. There are patches of Antarctic Beech, lookouts over the spectacular Mt. Warning and the Pinnacles, picnic and camping areas, and enough marked walking tracks to keep you busy for a week.

Washpool is basically a wilderness park, located north of the Glen Innes-Grafton road and adjacent to Gibraltar Range National Park. Two dirt roads lead to picnic grounds and a lookout on its southern fringe, but the forestry access tracks are overgrown and impassable.

Woko is not a northern rainforest park; it is located about 30 km north of Gloucester, making it easily accessible from Sydney on a long weekend. Campsites are located on the grassy flats of the upper Manning River (just drive right to them). A mountain range towers above the camp just begging to be explored.

ULOOLA FALLS OUTING

On the second day of winter - a pleasantly warm and sunny day - and at the appointed hour, a bright and eager crowd of 44 members and friends gathered at Waterfall Station. As one who never drinks morning and afternoon tea, the leader forgot the need for a suitable morning tea break and we were half way to Uloola Falls before he remembered. Despite this, and the numerous brief stops occasioned by the presence of our botanists, Nancy and Pat, we reached Uloola Falls for lunch after only about two hours actual walking time. From here, 26 of the party elected to walk back to Waterfall whilst the remaining 18 continued on through the head-high scrub down to Karloo Pool, then up the 120 metre high climb to Heathcote, arriving shortly after the departure of the hourly-interval train. But this was not catastrophic - most of the train travellers were given lifts home or near to home.

Harry Whaite.

CLEARING FOR PINES

Recently our Secretary, June Underwood, wrote on behalf of the Society to the Minister for Natural Resources, Janice Crosio, expressing our concern about the clearing of native forests for pine plantations. Here is the response from the Minister:

"The Government shares your desire to conserve native forests and, accordingly, endorses the Forestry Commission's objective of concentrating future establishment of new pine plantations, as far as possible, onto substantially cleared agricultural or pastoral land acquired for the purpose. The pursuit of this objective has already resulted in most of the current plantation establishment being directed to such acquired land, and establishment involving clearing of native vegetation being confined to a few remaining areas already roaded and otherwise substantially modified from the natural condition towards preparation for plantation establishment.

However, I cannot accept your claims that "there is plenty of already-cleared unprofitable farm land in New South Wales that would support pine plantations." In fact, there is quite strong competition for suitable land particularly in locations in proximity to existing plantation projects, and this imposes distinct constraints, both financially and in other practical aspects, on maintaining programmes based solely on acquired substantially cleared land."

A.C.F. SYDNEY HARBOUR CRUISE

Some O.F.F. members took up the Australian Conservation Foundation's offer to join its Sydney Harbour Inspection on Sunday, 3th April. Here is an account of the trip by Heather Mackey.

"The weather was inclement when the M.V. Royale left Circular Quay for the A.C.F. cruise. Rounding the Opera House, we kept close to the southern foreshore. On such a day visibility was at times a problem, but as we progressed it was an ideal situation to view the Eastern Suburbs storm water gushing from its outlets into the harbour. Also viewing the Hermitage Reserve through driving rain made us appreciate the sunny conditions of the previous O.F.F. outing. Passing the Heads was a hair-raising experience; then in very close to view the North Head Quarantine Station. From the commentary we learnt of the three classes of accommodation which had been available. On around Manly, back up the northern side of the harbour and into Middle Harbour where we lunched at Bantry Bay. To eat on board was the only thing to do as the rain again was pouring down. After lunch, the park rangers arrived by launch, so ashore we went to inspect the remains of the explosive magazines. The area is now controlled by the N.P.W.S., which eventually hopes to restore at least some of the buildings.

As we moved off, the sky cleared and we could sit outside and take in our spectacular waterway. Out of Middle Harbour, we now headed towards Ashton Park. The problem of die-back was explained. It seems salt from the sea spray mixed with large amounts of detergent is the main cause. On the other side of the Bridge, the scene changed, with Darling Harbour, the commercial area, old wharves being repaired, container terminals and lots of ships. Continuing on into the Parramatta River, we travelled past Ryde Bridge. Here there were small areas of public reserve on both sides of the river. For me one of the most interesting things on this part of the cruise was seeing the house Banjo Patterson had stayed in. As we headed back to the Quay, Val Douglas and I decided that the cruise had been most enjoyable and the commentary very informative. Finally I hope in the near future that North Head Quarantine Station will be open for inspection, and maybe we might all try the walk from Manly to Spit Bridge."

COMING A.C.F. MEETINGS

Tuesday, 19th June - Disposal of Hazardous Chemicals - the local scene.

Tuesday, 17th July - Native Fish - should we be exploiting them?

Meetings are held in Hallstrom Theatre, Australian Museum, William Street, Sydney.
7 p.m.

MOUNT KOSCIUSKO SUMMER SCHOOL

To be held at Jindabyne, January 13-18, 1985. Details in next OFF News.

COMING EVENTS:

All meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

June 25 (Monday). 7.45 p.m. GROWING NATIVE PLANTS. An informative talk with slides for those starting up a native garden or wishing to give variety to an existing garden. Peter Olde from Sutherland Branch of the Society for Growing Australian Plants will be sharing his experience with us.

30th (Saturday). BUS TRIP TO BOUDDI NATIONAL PARK. Leader, Harry Whaite. This will be a comparatively short and easy walk, covering only the central section of this unique coastal park. A bus will leave Oatley Station at 8 a.m. Bookings must be made for the bus. Ring Val Boyan, 533 1013, after 4 p.m. for bookings. The bus should arrive at the Dingeldei Shelter on Mount Bouddi about 2½ hours later. After morning tea, we will follow a well-graded track through both forest and heath country down to Maitland Bay, taking roughly an hour. The views southward along the coast are outstanding. We will lunch near the western end of the beach and then climb the main track back to the Scenic Drive (150 metres, or 500 feet above sea level) where the bus will be waiting. It is essential that we leave here about 2.30 p.m. in order to be back at Oatley Station by 5 p.m. It is recommended that the less active remain on the bus when it leaves Mount Bouddi and alight where the main track leaves the Scenic Drive for the beach. Following the track for about 400 m brings one to the Panorama Point Lookout which is a good locale for lunch. About 50 m before this lookout, a side track leads off to the right to the Bullimah Ridge and to the lookout of that name. This track is not much more than a kilometre in length, but is indefinite towards the end. It will provide a minor challenge for the more active members of the less active group.

July 2nd (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

9th (Monday). Inspection of LUCAS HEIGHTS REACTOR. The party must consist of only 12 members, so bookings must be made in advance. Ring Ida Carder (57 5909), Val Douglas (57 7783), or Olive Whaite (57 6459) to confirm your booking and for further information. We will meet outside the gates at Lucas Heights at 9.45 a.m. Bring your lunch if desired.

23rd (Monday). Harry Whaite's slides of CAPE YORK PENINSULA. Details in next month's O.F.F. News.

ADVANCE NOTICE !! Saturday, 1st December. Keep this date free for the Annual Dinner. Members who attended the Summer School at Jindabyne will be delighted to hear that Neville Gare is to be our guest speaker at our Annual Dinner. Neville Gare began his career as a professional forester in N.S.W. in 1952. Seven years later he resigned to take up an appointment as the first superintendent of Kosciusko National Park. In 1971 he went to New Guinea to establish that country's National Park organisation. In 1974, he joined the Commonwealth Public Service to establish the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service of which he is now Assistant Director. We are very fortunate that such an important person will be available for our dinner. As our Summer School students will testify, Mr. Gare is a most entertaining speaker. We are hoping that Mrs. Gare will be able to accompany him, as she also has had a wealth of experience in the Kosciusko.

You are invited to contribute to O.F.F. News. Letters and articles of up to 600 words are welcome. If you have enjoyed a good O.F.F. field day, why not put your feelings on paper so other members can share that pleasure?

| | | |
|------------------------|--|----------|
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July/August 1984

GROWING NATIVE PLANTS

Despite the coldness of the night, about 45 people attended our last meeting night to hear Peter Olde of the Sutherland Group of the Society for Growing Australian Plants (S.G.A.P.). Many O.F.F. members are already successfully growing native plants, and Peter's enthusiasm and commonsense approach will surely encourage more people to try. Come on ... rip up those dahlias, petunias and roses and grow some real flowers!

Peter began with the question: Why grow natives? A major motivational factor for him was to attract native birds to his garden. He also emphasised through his slides the great variety of native plants. This is not only in flowers, but also in the colour of the foliage, the scents and the textures. Landscaping your house with natives is a great challenge but also has great rewards. His slides showed some beautiful gardens, both large and small, which had been planted with natives.

Peter emphasised that growing natives required as much care and attention as any other plant. The traditional idea that native plants don't need attention simply means that gardens look untidy and the plants do not do well. The beginner needs to know how large a plant grows, what conditions it favours and how best to propagate it. Some species are easy to grow; to get others to survive is an achievement, but for the enthusiast this is the challenge and the interest.

In the past, people pulled up plants from the wild, but they usually died. This gave natives the reputation of being 'difficult'. Most people today buy nursery plants which are hardy. There are a number of specialist native nurseries. Having purchased a healthy plant, what then determines whether it lives are factors such as rainfall, humidity, cold and soil fungi. Western Australian species in particular suffer shock when grown in the Sydney area where the climate and soils are so different from the West.

S.G.A.P. has over the years done considerable work on what plants are most suitable for specific areas. Growing these from seed or cutting is challenging, time consuming but rewarding. Seeds can be purchased from S.G.A.P. (Sutherland) or from commercial companies. One service was recommended: Nindethana Seed Service, Narrikup, W.A. 6326. They have the largest selection of native seed in Australia; send a 30 cent stamp for a free catalogue listing over 1000 species of natives. There are books on cultivation from cuttings.

Some practical tips were given to help native plants survive. Good garden conditions will give good results. Check nursery plants for collar rot at the neck of the plant near the soil, and make sure it is not root-bound in the pot. Give it enough soil to grow in and remember that fine sands dry out quickly. Good drainage is essential - it is the most important thing for many plants; don't plant in spots where the water lies for long periods. Fertilize, but avoid products with excessive levels of phosphorus, such as fowl manure and super phosphate. Mulch, but don't dig it in and keep it away from the stems. Pruning should be done after flowering (usually November); cut back up to two thirds of the growth from the year before.

The S.G.A.P. publishes a magazine, Australian Plants, every three months. It is very informative and contains lots of colour photographs. O.F.F. subscribes to this magazine and back copies may be borrowed from the magazine box at meeting nights. Also recommended is Grow What Where, a book which lists suitable plants for various conditions, such as seaside, dry areas, screening, rockeries, etc.

OFF'S BUS TRIP TO BOUDDI

Harry Whaite reports on the Society's most successful recent field day. "The forward journey was made via Gosford and we reached the Mount Bouddi picnic area about one hour later than we hoped, and with rain threatening. Fortunately this did not materialise, but the sky remained cloudy and the southerly wind biting cold all day.

Thirty-one persons followed the writer down to Maitland Bay beach, whilst the remainder elected to travel the three kilometres by road round to the Old Maitland Store, where the beach-walking party would ultimately emerge from the 'wilds'. In recent months, both the tracks down to the beach have been much improved by the construction of log steps backfilled with soil. Whilst undoubtedly successful in reducing erosion, these steps offered a challenge to the more arthritic members of the party, but all made the grade without complaint, both down to the beach and up from the other end.

We lunched at the western end of the beach, near the shelter shed, where nearby shrubs and a more distant headland helped to moderate the effect of the wind. It was a hurried meal - only half an hour in duration. Had the weather been fine and sunny, we would have lingered longer in this delightful spot. It took us over half an hour to climb the direct track to the scenic road at the top and to the waiting bus. A quick return home was made via the Rip Bridge and Woy Woy, and we reached Oatley Station just before five. All appeared to have enjoyed the trip but it is my regret that the cloudy weather detracted from the magnificence of the views down the coast."

CONTINUING PROBLEMS IN OATLEY PARK

Members visiting Oatley Park have been worried about the apparent increase in hooliganism in the Park. Cars are exceeding the speed limit on the narrow winding roads and young people are riding bicycles the wrong way down one-way streets. It is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured or killed. Rubbish dumping is becoming a real problem; last month truckloads of household garbage were dumped in the central area of the Park. Other people are regarding the Park as a good place to get logs for their open fires. It is common to see people cutting up dead trees and loading them into their car. One OFF member even found someone sawing up the telegraph poles around the edge of a lookout and filling up his trailer. Although spoken to, this person was back half an hour later continuing his cutting. All these problems are occurring at a time when Hurstville Council seems to be very casual about its responsibilities to look after the Municipality's major bushland recreation area. Lack of co-operation by Council officers has led to the winding up of the Oatley Park Advisory Committee in which Oatley Flora and Fauna had a special interest and a strong representation. (The reasons for this Committee disbanding were given by its secretary, Tricia Koffel, who is also a committee member of OFF, in a headline report of the Leader, July 4th, 1984.)

If YOU see anyone damaging Oatley Park or disobeying regulations, (a) ask or tell them not to; (b) report them immediately to the ranger; (c) take the car number and report them to Hurstville Council; (d) ring OFF President or Secretary.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Society receives a regular supply of papers, journals and reports which may be of interest to members. They can be borrowed from Betty Hall, our librarian, at the meetings. Some of the latest to arrive are:

Ecus (Winter 1984) - articles on 'Fire in the Centre', 'Recording Insect Sounds' and 'The Impact of Insects on Forests'.

Wildlife Australia (Winter 1984) - articles on mammals of Tropical Australia, insects, parrots, the Reef.

Fund for Animals Newsletter (April 1984) - Antarctic policy, Iran's oil spill, marine reserves, sea-turtles, Canada's seal hunt.

Habitat (June 1984) - articles on the Bird Atlas, Cape Tribulation, mangroves and dolphins. An article by Geoff Mosley, Director of ACF, 'Why the Nuclear Question is the Ultimate Issue' is essential reading for everyone. It summarises the concern felt by environmentalists over the nuclear issue.

URANIUM POLICY

For some time now the Committee has been discussing whether O.F.F. should have a policy on the vexed question of uranium mining and export. The conservation movement in general is becoming more and more involved in this issue as it realises the dangers which may arise from the nuclear industry and the grave threats to life on this earth which would accompany a nuclear accident. At our last Annual General Meeting it was decided to develop a policy on this matter. At the end of February, we sent representatives to a conference held by the Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W. where a policy on uranium was formulated. Our Society's draft policy was published the March/April edition of OFF News, and comment was invited. Some letters have been received commenting on points from that draft policy. We have now been asked to endorse the policy of the Nature Conservation Council. This will be discussed at the next committee meeting. With even the Labor Party divided over its attitude to uranium, we realise that this is a potentially divisive issue, so we publish below the full N.C.C. policy, and again invite members to comment.

"Out of concern for the effects of nuclear war and the nuclear fuel cycle on all life on earth, and indeed the earth itself, the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales -

- opposes:
- (a) the mining and export of uranium, thorium and other nuclear fuels;
 - (b) the development and use of power stations fuelled by nuclear materials, uranium enrichment plants, or any other part of the nuclear fuel cycle;
 - (c) the manufacture, stockpile, deployment or use of nuclear weapons;
 - (d) the carriage of nuclear weapons and materials via Australian land, air space or territorial waters;
- supports:
- (a) taking strong economic and diplomatic action in all available international forums to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons;
 - (b) the declaration of a nuclear-free Pacific and the exclusion of nuclear weapons from Australia;
 - (c) increasing efforts to conserve energy;
 - (d) the use of renewable energy alternatives to both nuclear and fossil fuels;
 - (e) the development of alternatives to the use of radioactive materials for physical, biological, biochemical and medical research, diagnosis and treatment;

and urges the Australian Government to adopt policies to achieve these aims."

A CONSERVATION CLUB FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A new club has been formed by the Australian Conservation Foundation for young people under the age of 15 who enjoy the bush and animals and who would like to improve our environment. It is known as the QUEST CLUB. Questers will have a good time, with Club barbecues, bug spotting, rock pool walks and camping. They will also work to make their community a better place to live, by planting trees or removing rubbish. Surveys will also be carried out. Special investigations will be held and the information collected will be used by researchers at hospitals and museums. For example, the first survey will be of pet tropical fish and the results will help researchers to learn more about a rare skin disease.

Parents and grandparents!! Encourage your children to become active conservationists. Joining fees are \$10 per child, and \$5 for each additional family member. Annual membership begins on 1st July. Members receive an identification card, a Quest badge, four copies a year of Quest Newsletter with information and stories about the environment and a handbook with ideas for surveying animals and plants, survival hints and advice on planning walks and camps.

Send your cheque or money order to: ACF QUEST CLUB, 672b Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, Victoria, 3122.

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

July 23rd (Monday). Cape York Peninsula. Slides by Harry Whaite. A record of Harry and Olive's trip with four others in a four wheel-drive along the Peninsula Development Road to Cape York and Somerset, with side visits to Rokeby National Park, and the Aboriginal painting site in the Quinkan Reserve near Laura. 7.45 p.m.

28th (Saturday). Field Day. Walk to Robertson Knoll, Royal National Park. Leader: Pat Akkersdyk. Meet 10 a.m. at the picnic area near the Bunya Pines. From the Causeway, drive towards Lady Carrington Drive and then turn right over the wooden bridge to the picnic area. Bring lunch. The walk is short (only 1.5 km each way), but the track is a little rough and at first up hill. From the Knoll there are beautiful views over the park and towards Sydney. Boronia and other plants should be flowering and Pat will supply a plant list for those interested in identifying some of the species. The walk may be extended towards Engadine if the group wishes.

August 6th (Monday). Oatley flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

27th (Monday). Talk and slides on the breathtaking scenery of the Himalayas by well-known conservationist Milo Dunphy.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Australian Conservation Foundation has notified us of these coming events. Meetings are held in the Hallstrom Theatre, Australian Museum, William Street, Sydney at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, 17th July - Native Fish: Should we still be exploiting them?

Tuesday, 21st August - A Nuclear Free Society: How do we get it?

Urban Environmental Education. Third National Conference. This will be held at the University of Sydney from Sunday, 26th August to Friday, 31st August. The Prime Minister, Mr. Hawke, will open the Conference and the keynote speaker will be Chris Webb, Director of the Nottingdale Urban Studies Centre, London. At least 12 excursions are planned. Fees are \$75, or \$15 per day. Further information from the Convenor, Di Collins, telephone - 266 0661.

Mount Kosciusko Summer School. A brochure has been received with details of the next Summer School to be held at Jindabyne, January 13 to 18th. The school will focus on the alpine region near Mt. Kosciusko. Themes to be explored will include: the history of the Snowy Mts; land forms and geology; alpine wildflowers; fauna of the alpine region; and managing the Kosciusko National Park. An enrolment fee of \$140 covers all lectures, field trips and lunch and morning tea. As demand is usually strong, you are advised to book soon with the Department of Continuing Education, University of New England, Armidale, 2351.

SOME NOT-SO-LIGHT READING

Everyone concerned with the future of sand mining at Kurnell and in other environmentally sensitive areas, such as the MacDonald Valley, should read a major report recently prepared by the Department of Environment and Planning and circulated for public comment. Entitled Sydney's Extractive Industry' (Regional Environmental Study), it is available for inspection at the Town Planning Department of the local council, or can be purchased for \$7.50 from DEP, 175 Liverpool Street, Sydney, or 52 Bay Street, Rockdale.

You are invited to contribute to O.F.F. News. Letters and articles of up to 600 words are welcome. If you have enjoyed a good O.F.F. field day, why not put your feelings on paper so other members can share that pleasure?

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August/September, 1984

EDITORIAL

One of the good things about being a 'conservationist' is the knowledge that you are never alone. There are like-minded people all around the world who are willing to do something to put their ideals into practice to improve the quality of life for future generations. Membership of a 'grassroots' organization such as Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society is a contribution not just to a local group fighting local battles but a positive link with other organizations which set their sights beyond the local horizon and fight their battles in state-wide, national or global arenas. This link is strengthened by an exchange of information between organizations through newsletters and pamphlets and by this Society's written support through its letters and petitions. But membership of O.F.F. contributes to the overall conservation movement in a more direct and practical way. Most of the Society's excess funds are donated to other conservation organizations to help them to pursue current campaigns. O.F.F. has a very commendable record in the support of major issues. We have contributed financially to a great range of campaigns over the years, and are continuing to do so. In the last few weeks, we have made small but significant donations to the A.C.F. Daintree Fund and the World Wildlife Fund for the Protection of Endangered Plants. Our subscription to Total Environment Centre, Colong Committee, National Parks Association and other groups helps in the exchange of information through their newsletters and is a small contribution to the group, the more effective we can be in adding our support to the cause of conservation everywhere.

HELP THE T.E.C.

The Total Environment Centre (18 Argyle Street, Sydney. Telephone 27 4714) is appealing for help, either by way of a donation or volunteer work. This organization is in the forefront of conservation in this State and its Director, Milo Dunphy (the speaker at our next meeting), is a well-known 'greenie'. Some current concerns are alienation of open space, protection of rare and endangered wildlife, hazardous chemicals, new national parks, and nuclear issues. Donations are tax deductible. If you have any time or skills to donate, give them a ring.

TO CAPE YORK WITH OLIVE AND HARRY

Members at last month's meeting were treated to a most interesting armchair trip from Cairns to Cape York from Olive and Harry Whaite. We all came away with a much clearer idea of the Cape. Harry's slides depicted the grasslands, beautiful camp sites, rugged river crossings, Aboriginal cave paintings, northern wildflowers and the spectacular coastline around the actual Cape. We were shocked to hear that the Queensland Government had actually leased a large area of the Cape to an airline company for development.

NEW NATIONAL PARK IN A.C.T.

The Commonwealth Government has announced the establishment of an important new national park in the A.C.T. It will be called NAMADGI NATIONAL PARK, and will be 94,000 hectares, that is, six times the size of Royal National Park. The park will include most of the outstanding high mountain country to the south-west of Canberra. The area is renowned for its scenery, diverse plant communities in alpine and sub-alpine environments, snow gum woodlands and spagnum bogs. There is also a wide range of animals, including possums, gliders, wombats, koalas, corroboree frogs, platypus and freshwater blackfish.

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

August 27th (Monday). You have heard Milo Dunphy's views on important conservation issues. You have read about him in the newspapers and probably seen him on television. Now the State's best known conservationist and Oatley resident will present a different side of his interests with some breathtaking slides and exciting talk on the Himalayas, entitled, 'EVEREST, ANNAPURNA AND MAKALU REGIONS IN NEPAL'. This is a good meeting to introduce a friend to the Society. Satisfaction guaranteed!!

September 1st (Saturday). Field Day. Walk in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. The Sphinx to Bobbin Head. Meet the leader, Val Boyan, at the Sphinx parking area at 10 a.m. The Sphinx is along the Bobbin Head Road which leaves the Pacific Highway between Pymble and Turramurra; turn right immediately after the toll gate of the National Park. The Sphinx is a model of the Egyptian figure carved out of a solid block of sandstone by an ex-soldier in memory of his fallen comrades of World War I. Val intends to walk to Bobbin Head along the shores of Cowan Creek, and return by way of the old road which zig-zags up the hill to the ridge. The round trip is about 10 km, but anyone who wants to go only half way can wait at Bobbin Head and pick-up cars will be arranged. Carry lunch and drink. There are kiosks at Bobbin Head. This is a beautiful walk at this time of the year -one not to be missed.

3rd (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

16th (Sunday). Wirrimbirra Sanctuary, Open Day. For details, see below.

24th (Monday). Bob Crombie, Senior Ranger of Royal National Park will talk and show slides on our National Parks.

ALTERATION TO PROGRAMME. Please note on your programme that the advertised date for the bus trip and flower study day to Castlereagh Forest and Agnes Banks has been changed. It is now on Saturday, 6th October.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Australian Conservation Foundation. Meeting at Hallstrom Theatre, Australian Museum, William Street, Sydney at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, 18th September - 'National Parks - Are they for the people?'

National Parks Association, Sydney Branch. Meeting at Hallstrom Theatre, Australian Museum, William Street, Sydney at 7.30 p.m.

Monday, 10th September - Antarctica: plans for the 1984/85 expedition and an audio-visual story of the 1983 expedition to Heard Island.

Total Environment Centre, 18 Argyle Street, Sydney.

Saturday, 8th September to Friday, 14th September. Annual Second-hand Book Sale.

WIRRIMBIRRA OPEN DAY

We have received a note from our friends at Wirrimbirra Sanctuary inviting Society members down to the Open Day on Sunday, 16th September. If you haven't been to Wirrimbirra, you have missed a delightful spot; if you have been there, you will know what a great place it is in spring. The sanctuary is well signposted along the Hume Highway at Bargo, south of Picton.

The sanctuary is planted with wild flowers from all round Australia. Also there will be a 'floral and foliage display - flamboyant, delicate, quaint, rare and endangered species'. A white-flowering waratah is a highlight. There will be a programme of speakers and led walks from 9.45 to 4 p.m. Teachers will be shown how to use the facilities of the Field Study Centre and classroom. Walk leaders will be from the National Trust as well as the Sanctuary. A sausage sizzle with salad is planned for lunch; should you wish to join this lunch, please book in advance, by ringing (046) 84 1112 by 11th September.

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EDITORIAL

OFFICIAL VANDALISM. A recent letter in the Leader complaining about the lack of planning in the new subdivisions at Menai-Bangor confirms a feeling that I have had for some time - that government departments are among the worst perpetrators of environmental damage. They seem to act in ways which ride rough-shod over individual rights and local community interests and are not subjected to the same restraints which are placed on individuals or private companies. To quote from Paul Miskelly's letter:

'All around Sydney we find residents and councils trying to re-green our city to make up for past mistakes in development. In West Menai we find Landcom still forging ahead with those gung-ho practices of yesteryear - flatten, then develop. The result is loss of the bush, massive soil erosion and weed invasion.'

Anyone who has looked at the new subdivisions at Menai and Alford Point would be horrified at what Landcom is doing in the name of development and progress. The destruction caused makes Landcom's advertisements of 'bushland blocks' a farce. The lack of balance and planning is highlighted by a new subdivision on the escarpment directly above the Woronora River at Engadine Heights, land which should have been declared public parkland to protect the scenic beauty of the Woronora Valley.

Another example of this official vandalism is the Department of Main Roads which has convinced the N.S.W. Cabinet to allow it to build the Hornsby to Berowra freeway through the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, threatening a number of rare and endangered plants and causing erosion and siltation of Park streams. Certainly a new road is needed, but it has been shown that there are cheaper alternatives, such as upgrading the existing highway. The very concept of regarding national parks as easy prey for developmental schemes should be vigorously opposed by conservationists. The D.M.R. also plans to build roads through the Royal National Park, a reserve at Newcastle and Wollli Creek Reserve and seem about to replace the Forestry Commission as the biggest environmental vandal in the State.

Environmental destruction sanctioned by government bodies is all around us. The Armed Forces are ripping up beautiful heathland near Liverpool for a car park; the Electricity Commission persists with excessive clearing under power lines; National Parks and local Councils continue the outdated and senseless policy of 'hazard-reduction' burning of the bush; Landcom is moving into Crown lands on the North Coast which have been ear-marked for national park extensions. Recently in Bexley, a gang with chainsaws entered a native garden without permission, hacked the top off shrubs and branches off small trees with complete disregard for the rarity of the plants or their subsequent appearance. The excuse was that the plants were a threat to the high voltage wire above, but none of the plants grew, nor was likely to grow, more than 2 metres tall and would never be a problem. A case of officialdom gone mad!!!

BITS AND PIECES

The Wollli Creek and Bardwell Valley Preservation Society is pushing to have the County Roads Reservation along Wollli Creek removed and to rezone the land as Open Space. It is the only bushland area in Canterbury.

All local councils are not sympathetic to conservation needs. For example, Ballina Shire Council has abandoned its Environment Protection Zones and is encouraging local residents to remove mangroves. The pressure is on North Coast councils for this sort of action because of the money involved in development.

N.C.C. Conference

Each year conservation groups send representatives to the Nature Conservation Council annual meeting. Motions from the groups are presented for discussion and adoption. This year OFF has presented the following motion:

'That the N.C.C. urge the Commonwealth Government to allow special tax deductions to primary producers for the planting and maintenance of indigenous trees as an incentive towards rehabilitating land already over-cleared.'

Probably the most important single factor contributing to soil degradation in the past has been over-clearing. That there is an urgent need to combat this is now widely recognised by Government and scientific bodies, and for this reason, the National Soil Conservation Program has been initiated by the Government.

The purpose of this Program is to "develop and implement national policies for the rehabilitation and sustainable utilisation of the Nation's soil and land resources."

Undoubtedly, some financial incentives will be, and have been, offered to land users to bring about these aims. Special tax deductions for land clearing have recently been terminated. These deductions, in the past, have contributed to much unnecessary and unwise clearing. We suggest that one of the first priorities in implementing the Program could be the encouragement of land users to actually plant trees by granting a special tax deduction for planting and maintenance of suitable species.

This could be granted at once while other methods of soil restoration are being investigated.

VISIT A NATIVE GARDEN

September and October are great months to visit the native gardens of the Sydney area. The flowers are beautiful this year, so here are a few interesting places where the wildflowers are at their best.

JOSEPH BANKS GARDEN, KAREELA. Along Bates Drive from the Princes Highway. Enter via Manooka Place where there is a small car park. Well-made tracks. Some of the area has been newly planted, including a rainforest gully.

YERAMBA GARDENS. Maintained by Bankstown Council. Sylvan Grove, off Henry Lawson Drive, Picnic Point. An excellent varied collection, including some rare and endangered plants. Highlights include the rainforest gully with its many ferns, boronias, numerous wattles and grevilleas. Easy walking.

KU-RING-GAI WILDFLOWER GARDEN. A large area off Mona Vale Road, North St. Ives. Many hours can be spent exploring this area. Plantings have been made in the top part of the park, but the lower area still retains its original vegetation. There is a kiosk and picnic facilities and a charge per car for admission.

MUOGAMARRA NATURE RESERVE. Off old Pacific Highway, north of Cowan. A delightful area with natural vegetation, Aboriginal engravings and the old convict-built Peats Road. Contains a number of plants common on the north side but not often seen in our area.

WIRRIMBIRRA SANCTUARY. Along the Hume Highway, at Bargo, south of Picton. Wild flowers from all around Australia. A great place in spring.

GLENBROOK GARDENS. Managed by the Lower Blue Mountains S.G.A.P. On the northern side of the Great Western Highway at Glenbrook. Easy walks and a large variety of interesting plants. Ask to be shown the *Isopogon dawsonii*, a rare Blue Mountain's drumstick.

STONY RANGE FLORA RESERVE. Pittwater Road, Dee Why. A well-established and interesting native garden, small but with a great variety of plants.

KATANDRA BUSHLAND SANCTUARY. Mona Vale. Go past the Baha'i Temple in Mona Vale Road and turn left into Lane Cove Road, past Walter Road and down the hill to the Sanctuary. Open every Sunday during August, September and October from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. A pamphlet on the history, geology and plants of the reserve is available. An area of 12 hectares of valuable bushland in the middle of expanding suburbia. The land was purchased by Mr. Harold Seymour at the end of World War II. Mr. Seymour donated the land to nature conservation and a Sanctuary was proclaimed in 1967. The park is managed by the Katandra Bushland Club, who have constructed tracks through the reserve.

WOLLONGONG BOTANIC GARDENS. Beneath Mt. Keira, near the University. After descending Mt. Ousley Road, go past the University, then take the overhead bridge westwards and follow the signposts. Plenty to see.

Harry Whaite has just returned from a trip to far north Queensland with an old school friend and fellow bushwalker, Ewan Martin. Over a period of 25 days they backpacked with Matt Trezise in the Quinkan Reserve west of Laura, did coach trips to Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria and to Cooktown, and spent a week exploring national parks on and near the Atherton Tableland. During the last-named period, Harry climbed Queensland's highest mountain, Mt. Bartle Frere, 1611 metres (5287 ft) at the southern end of the Bellenden Ker National Park. The Park stretches 33 km from near Innisfail to opposite Gorgonvale, 24 km south of Cairns. It covers 44000 hectares and consists mainly of upland tropical rainforest. Harry has written a short account of his experience on the climb.

TO THE SUMMIT OF BARTLE FRERE (by Harry Whaite)

Ewan Martin and I called at Innisfail to replenish our food and were fortunate that one small store remained open on Sundays. By noon we had reached the ranger's cottage near Josephine Falls at the southern end of the Park. Apart from obtaining a camping permit and letting him know our plans, I was hoping to borrow a map of the summit area. But he and his family were out, so we left at 2.30 p.m. after leaving a note detailing our proposed plans. Scarcely had we started along the track than we met a Townsville party on their way out and were fortunate to be able to borrow a copy of the summit map lent to them by the ranger on the previous day.

Ewan's feet were still blistered from our walk in Quinkan Reserve, so it took us over two hours to reach the Big Rock campsite on Majuba Creek (a height of about 450 m). Have you ever tried to light a fire in tropical rainforest after heavy rain? Well, we succeeded and by dark (about 6.30 p.m.) had finished a welcome meal of salami, freeze-dried vegetables and stewed mixed fruits. No rain fell overnight, and only one leech managed to get into a sleeping bag (Ewan's).

Next morning Ewan's feet were much better but his hip was giving trouble, so after a perfunctory breakfast, I set out alone for the summit, crossing the creek by jumping from boulder to boulder, then up the grassy and slippery track, sometimes hand over hand. In most places it is well defined and orange plastic tape has been tied around small trees at doubtful points. At about 300 m above camp I entered the cloud cover. A chill breeze blew from the south-east, water dripped continuously from the trees, and I was soon wet to the skin. I made a point of climbing 25 minutes, then resting for 5, during which time I removed the accumulation of leeches from my socks and legs. Three and a half hours after leaving camp, I had reached a height of 1470 m, and reckoned I would reach the summit in about half an hour. I was at the edge of the rainforest and faced with an easy rock climb up to a heath-covered ridge. Ahead the worst obstacle of the climb loomed through the fog - a mound of large granite boulders piled haphazardly on one another and rising 60 m in height to the summit. Most were dry, but some were wet and slippery and, at the very least, a fall would have resulted in a sprained ankle. Recently the ranger had painted with pink arrows a practicable route to the top. This took 20 minutes to negotiate and I continued on through a tea-tree (*Leptospermum woornooran*) forest which constitutes most of the cloud-forest on the top. At this stage I suspected that I was past the summit and heading for the north-west peak. The ranger's map confirmed this. It had taken me just over 4 hours to reach the top.

After a brief lunch, I climbed and photographed the highest rock on the summit. Like Mt. Ossa, Tasmania's highest, there is no trig station on this mountain. Nor, due to the fog, was there any view, so I set out down in some trepidation. But the top rocks proved much easier to negotiate and the only moment of doubt occurred much lower down, when thick fog temporarily limited visibility to about 4 metres. But I was back at the Big Rock base camp in just over 3 hours.

Next day dawned fine and clear and I was tempted to re-climb the mountain to see the view. But the wisdom that comes with age prevailed, so we broke camp and left for the lowlands.

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- * Members report that the Waratahs are beautiful this year along the fire trail at the end of Bottle Forest Road, Heathcote.
 - * Val Argall has recently returned from four days in the Warrumbungles. Koalas, emus, kangaroos and lots of wildflowers were seen, but perhaps the highlight was the display of wattle along the roadsides.
 - * Betty Hall will not be our Librarian next year. Anyone interested in the position? It involves bringing the box of books along to our meetings, so regular attendance and a car would be necessary requirements.
-

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

September 24th (Monday). Bob Crombie is Senior Park Ranger at Royal National Park. He has a wealth of experience in managing national parks and a wide knowledge of the beauty spots of N.S.W. He will be presenting a talk with slides entitled 'OUR NATIONAL PARKS'.

October 6th (Saturday). Bus trip. Flower study day to Agnes Banks and Castlereagh State Forest. Leader: Alan Fairley. Your opportunity to see the plant life of the Cumberland Plain. Many of the species found in the area are absent from the sandstone areas of the coastal national parks. (See elsewhere in this newsletter for information on the area). As the purpose of the outing is to have a good look at the flowers, we will be walking slowly and probably not very far. Tracks are flat, sandy or clayey (muddy after rain).

Arrangements: Bookings for bus should be made in advance by phoning Val Boyan (533 1013). Cost: \$7.50. Bus departs Oatley Station at 8 a.m. Bring lunch, drinks, binoculars, flower books, etc. Anyone wishing to travel by car can meet us at Rickards Road, near Nepean Speedway (south of Agnes Banks which is south of Richmond) at 9.30 a.m.

8th (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. (Note change of date because of the long weekend.) Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

22nd (Monday). Monthly meeting. 'CONSERVATION IN SRI LANKA AND BORNEO'. Slides and talk by Alan Fairley.

TWO DATES TO REMEMBER: November 3/4 - OFF's weekend away to Bungonia.

December 1 - Our Annual Dinner. Guest speaker, Neville Gare, Assistant Director, Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Society receives a regular supply of papers, journals and reports which may be of interest to members. They can be borrowed from Betty Hall, our librarian, at the meetings. Some of the latest to arrive are:

Australian Habitat (August 1984). Articles on 'Arid Lands', 'Economic Importance of National Parks', 'Daintree Rainforest' and 'Expressway Threat to Wollie Creek'.

National Parks Journal (July 1984). Articles on Wilderness, Nangar National Park, Rainforest Regeneration, Expansion in the Blue Mountains and Fuel Reduction Burning.

Australian Plants (March and June 1984). Pimeleas, Seed Germination, Rockeries.

World Wildlife Fund's Spring 1984 Catalogue. Listing for sale a huge range of products, including cards, Christmas wrapping paper, calendars, toys, dolls, and other gift items. An excellent way to purchase an original gift and at the same time support the worthy work of the World Wildlife Fund.

AGNES BANKS. (Some notes about the site of our next Field Trip, extracted from Cunninghamia, a Royal Botanic Gardens publication.)

Just southeast of the village of Agnes Banks, 5 km southwest of Richmond, large Scribbly Gums, twisted Angophoras, tall Banksias and a host of coastal dune species flourish on an expanse of gently undulating white sand. The whole site is in many ways similar to coastal sand dune vegetation, such as that at Myall Lakes, but it is 55 km from the coast on the western margin of the Cumberland Plain. It is surrounded by heavy clay soils which support a grassy woodland quite unlike that of the sand deposit. The deposit of white sand originally covered an area of some 600 ha. About half the original sand area has been cleared or quarried and most of the remainder has been committed for future sand extraction. Only a small area is preserved as a Nature Reserve. The affinities of the vegetation to that of coastal sand dunes is seen in the fact that 47% of the Agnes Banks flora is found at Myall Lakes. The vegetation of the sand deposit is woodland. Dominant trees are Eucalyptus sclerophylla, E. parramattensis and Angophora bakeri. There is a rich scrub understorey, including Banksia aemula, the Wallum of Queensland's sandy coast; the nearest record of this plant is in the sands near Bondi, over 60 km away. The wattles, heaths and pea-flowers are an outstanding feature of the understorey.

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October/November, 1984

PROBLEMS FACING THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

At our last meeting, Acting Chief Ranger of Royal National Park, Bob Crombie, spoke of some of the serious management problems facing the Park. As we hear so much about the value of the Park, it is appropriate to consider some of the threats to its natural values, and what we, as conservationists, can do about them ...

In the past, Royal National Park formed part of a continuous stretch of country which allowed animals to move freely without being restricted by man-made barriers. However the Park is now cut off from most of that bushland to the west and south by the Highway, the Expressway and by the Illawarra Railway. These form real barriers to animal movement. As regular bushfires kill mammals, they are not being replaced by migration through bushland corridors, and the extinction of a number of animals from the Park is highly likely. The acquisition of land around Garrawarra Hospital and at Otford and its addition to the Park is urgently needed. Not only do these areas have a high conservation value, but they will also provide valuable corridors for animals to enter the Park from the south-west.

Developments on the fringes of the Park are worrying. Landcom is proposing a satellite city at Helensburg, with a ten fold increase in the present population. Other land is also marked for urban development. The natural values of the Hacking River are endangered by such developments, as the catchments of the River are not within the Park and any pollution or run-off from streams to the west and south finds its way into the river.

The river has already been damaged and there is a heavy weed growth moving down the river. In 1977 a truck carrying poisons overturned on the Princes Highway. The spilt fluids were hosed off the road and made their way into a side creek and eventually into the Hacking River. The tragic result was the killing of every platypus in the river. The sewage treatment works at Garrawarra frequently breaks down and partly treated sewage is emptied into Cawleys Creek. That creek is now dominated by weeds which are moving into the Hacking River. Rotten material also enters the National Park catchment from Helensburg sewage works and tip, and the Metropolitan Colliery's coal dump is placed at the head of Camp Gully Creek, causing obvious pollution.

The recent electrification of the Illawarra Railway and construction of a sewer line has led to heavy siltation of creeks. There was no Environmental Impact Statement or consideration of environmental factors with these constructions. The result is massive erosion. Roads bulldozed through without adequate drainage have been washed away by rain. It is an environmental disaster! Before 1977, the Hacking River was an attractive clean river. Now it is silted, polluted and full of weeds.

Other problems face the Park. One is the State Government's requirement to burn. You have the Catch-22 situation that the more people who come to enjoy the bush, the more that bush has to be burnt to protect them. All the bush on both sides of the road at Wattamolla and Loftus Heights must be burnt regularly to protect people in cars. Weeds, such as lantana, mist flower, bitou bush and crofton weed, are spreading in the Park at a rapid rate, replacing the native flora, upsetting the wildlife balance and degrading the natural values. The dumping of stolen cars, which are often set alight, of rubbish and garden refuse, are becoming more common. Garden refuse introduces a whole range of weeds into the bush. Die-back has been recorded in four roadside areas; this has the potential of devastating the trees and shrubs and is easily spread on shoes and car tyres. The illegal use of fire-trails by four-wheel drive vehicles, trail bikes and horses will lead to die-back in much of the Park.

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

October 22nd (Monday). 7.45 p.m. Nature and Conservation in Borneo and Sri Lanka.

Slides and talk by Alan Fairley. Areas visited include Mount Kinabalu National Park in Sabah. At 4100 metres, Mt. Kinabalu is the highest mountain in South-east Asia and home of many unique plants and animals.

November 3rd and 4th. Weekend away to Bungonia Gorge. Leader: Val Boyan.

Meeting place: The Bungonia turn-off on the Hume Highway not far beyond Marulan at 10 a.m. Saturday. This is about a 2-hour drive from Sydney. A bush camping weekend. Bring your own water in case none is available. Some of us hope to descend and walk the gorge on Sunday. Please let the leader know if you are coming. Telephone 533 1013.

5th (Monday). Oatley Park flower study walk. Meet 10 a.m. at kiosk. If in doubt because of weather, ring Nancy Beattie on 523 7458.

26th (Monday). Annual General Meeting and Social Supper. 7.45 p.m.

AN EVENING IN THE RAINFOREST WITH DAVID BELLAMY

Presented by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society. World famous botanist, David Bellamy, draws attention to the need for preservation of areas of the North Queensland rainforest, including the Daintree, which should be inscribed on the World Heritage List as the Wet Tropics of Australia. Talks - Audiovisuals - Music. Don't let our beautiful and unique wet tropics fall prey to developers and timber interests.

Sydney Town Hall, Thursday, 1st November, at 8 p.m.

Admission: \$6.00 or \$4.00 concession.

WILDERNESS DIARY 1985

The 1985 ACF Wilderness Diary is now available. It is a superb photographic portrait of Australia's finest wilderness areas. With an inspiring new colour photograph for each week of the year, and a spacious date page for engagements, this beautiful diary is an ideal gift for friends, family and business colleagues in Australia and overseas. Cost is \$12.95 plus \$1.50 for postage. Send your cheque to: Australian Conservation Foundation, 672B Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, Vic. 3122.

ANNUAL DINNER

December 1st. The cost of the O.F.F. Dinner has been kept the same as last year - \$8.00. Bookings are now being accepted. Ring Ida Carder (57 5909) or Val Boyan (533 1013, after 4 p.m.).

POSITION VACANT - HON. SECRETARY

After two years of duty, our Hon. Secretary, June Underwood, has informed us that she is unable to continue in the position next year. The Society will miss her dedication and efficiency, especially as there is no obvious successor to the position. With the Annual General Meeting coming up, members are asked to consider taking on this position. The job is not too onerous, requiring a monthly attendance at a committee meeting and typing a few letters. Many of these letters are written in committee. Contact John Blacker if you think you can help.

AGNES BANKS AND CASTLEREAGH BUS TRIP

Beautiful weather, a great variety of flowers and a good group of people made the bus trip to Agnes Banks a very successful event. O.F.F.'s bus was met at the Reserve by members from local S.G.A.P. groups, including Brian Walters, Peter Vaughan and Gordon Franklin of Hawkesbury S.G.A.P. and Fay Smedley of Parramatta-Hills S.G.A.P. After a wander around the sandy habitat of Agnes Banks, we made an unscheduled lunch-time stop at Brian Walters house and wonderful native garden. This was probably the highlight of the day. How did he get those flannel flowers to grow so large? The variety and colour of plants were amazing and we thank Brian for his hospitality.

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COASTAL WETLANDS UNDER THREAT

The wetlands along the coast of New South Wales are probably our most endangered habitat. Almost every lagoon, mangrove zone and estuary is suffering from the effects of development and increased recreational use. Many have already been lost by being filled in or are being silted or polluted so badly that their natural qualities have been lost. The coastline has many of our most attractive and dramatic landscapes, and with its beaches, embayments and estuaries, it is the greatest single playground for Australians and visitors. It is also highly sought after for home sites and the increased development is having a deleterious effect on the visual and ecological values of the coast.

To most people wetlands are swampy, muddy, smelly and unpleasant. But they are a valuable habitat and food resource for a large range of animals. Tidal wetlands contribute nutrients to estuaries and therefore form the first link in the food chain for animals. They are nursery areas for aquatic animals such as fish, crustaceans, oysters and other molluscs. They may have considerable scientific interest. Yet the value of wetlands is often not recognised and few are properly protected. Local councils persist in reclaiming them for industrial or residential development, for bigger marinas, for playing fields, garbage dumps and 'beautification' works. In the name of 'flood mitigation' swamps are drained, levee banks built and the lagoons are opened to the sea, destroying the natural ecology.

A 1983 Pollution Control Commission report summed up the situation in this manner:

'The main types of water pollution in the river systems have been nutrient enrichment, caused by sewage discharges and septic systems seepage, industrial effluents and discharges, and increased sedimentation and turbidity due to both urban encroachment on waterways and upstream sand mining. Oil spills are a major concern in Port Jackson and Botany Bay.

The coastal lagoons, such as Lake Macquarie, Tuggerah Lakes and Lake Illawarra, have suffered from urban encroachment and discharges of industrial effluents, particularly heavy metals. Many smaller lagoons have also experienced a deterioration of water quality in the past from a combination of nutrient enrichment, leachates from rubbish tips and discharges from light industry.'

While some wetland areas have the protection of national park or nature reserve status, there is an urgent need to identify those areas of special significance outside the park system, to map them thoroughly, and to zone them in such a way as to prevent any further deterioration.

WETLANDS KIT

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has produced a teaching resource kit for primary and lower secondary students on the theme of Wetlands. It contains activity sheet masters, background research material, and lots of activity, craft and resource ideas for teachers. There are also photo cards and a large poster. Cost is \$8.00. For further information telephone the Education Officer, N.P.W.S., Tel. 237 6500.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON WETLANDS

The National Trust has produced a free information leaflet titled 'The Choice is Yours - Wetlands or Wastelands'. It is available from the National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill, Sydney.

NOTES FROM A HAPPY WANDERER. Gwen Helman.

If you have ever thought of doing a coach-camping safari to the Red Centre and all points north, don't think any more - just do it. I've just returned from one of the best holidays ever with Australian Pacific in which we were in every state except Tasmania.

From the Riverina we went north through Burra to Port Augusta, then on through Woomera to Coober Pedy where we slept underground. Continuing on we climbed (or didn't climb) the Rock, walked in the Olgas and liked Alice very much. The Tanami Track to Halls Creek was quite good and the country was anything but desert with good grass cover and small trees. Broome was attractive and popular. The Gibb River road took us through the Kimberleys which surprised us by being so often flat, but the camps at the Gorges were just beautiful with good swimming holes. There were cruises at Geikie Gorge, Lake Argyle, Katherine Gorge and on the South Alligator River in the Kakadu National Park.

Travelling south down the Stuart Highway, we returned to Alice and from there went east along the edge of the Simpson Desert to Boulia in Queensland, thence to Birdsville and down the Birdsville Track through Sturts Stony Desert (fascinating country) to Marree and the Flinders Ranges. Then home by way of Broken Hill, Menindie, Ivanhoe, Leeton and Bathurst.

This was a month of the greatest interest spent in good company and we all felt with Clancy that we had seen

'...the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,
And by night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.'

OIL SPILL, BOTANY BAY

Yet another oil spill occurred in Botany Bay in late October when a Maritime Services Board dredge struck a submerged pipeline. Oil drifted onto the beaches of Kurnell, polluted the mangroves along the southern shores and threatened the oyster leases. Negligence is believed to be the cause of the incident. Bernie Clarke (you remember Bernie; he gave a talk to O.F.F. about the problems of Botany Bay) was strongly critical of the fact that the heaviest fine ever imposed on anyone polluting Botany Bay was \$400. He also criticised the use of detergents to disperse the oil slick. It settled the oil on the seabed where it killed bottom dwelling fish such as flathead.

THE GREAT BUNGONIA GORGE ADVENTURE - 3/4 NOVEMBER - REPORT BY JOHN BLACKER

A very successful and adventurous weekend was enjoyed by 25 intrepid OFF members lead by Val Boyan. Some missed the 10 a.m. assembly at the Bungonia turnoff due to a broken windscreen, a wait at the wrong cemetery, or just being late, however we all came together at the camping ground. The recent replanning of the camping ground at Bungonia Gorge has been very well done with vehicle access restricted to the lookouts and the main caves. Our compliments go to the NPWS for a well organised and well run area. Hard hats and muddy overalls identified the fair sprinkling of cavers in the main camping ground, however the OFF campers found a quiet, private spot to the south (well away from the main activity).

Saturday afternoon was occupied by a walk around the edge of the main gorge which is very beautiful and in places scary and dangerous. The bush was particularly lush with lots of flowers - the best the ranger had seen for many years. Thunder, lightning and heavy rain in the early evening encouraged attendance at the ranger's slide show where it was dry and warm, and consequently very crowded. The rain stopped and we returned to the camp fire and had a very pleasant finish to the day.

Sunday morning we were away at 8 a.m. to 'go down the gorge'. Val had been assured by the ranger that the water level of the Bungonia Creek was low. After an hour-long, steep climb 1200 ft. down the Efflux, across loose scree, rock and mud, we found the water level in the creek to be high. Within 200m we had to wade making it necessary for certain members of the party to strip to their knickers. From here on the three young men with us were very helpful in forward exploring and helping the less agile over the awkward terrain. At the end of 'the slot' the high water meant we had to cross the creek. Our leader lost her footing and got dunked, so we then formed a human chain to get across. It was very spectacular at this point with towering perpendicular cliffs, rushing water, and enormous white limestone boulders littering the floor of the gorge, which were difficult to clamber over. After lunch, a steep climb out, not for the weak-hearted, was made worthwhile by the spectacular views. 16 made the ascent and all agreed it was a 4 star weekend - one of our best. The one detracting point was the devastation and ugliness of the limestone quarry - a shameful blot on a beautiful landscape.

THE TANAMI IN JULY. Mimi Godfrey

The Tanami Track commences in the Northern Territory, but to reach it, it is necessary to turn south just west of Halls Creek in Western Australia. This track was made by the early miners who, wheeling their equipment in barrows, crossed the desert to seek their fortunes in the Tanami and Granite Creek goldfields. Now the track serves scattered cattle stations but is used also by adventurous travellers and the Wailbri tribe who move regularly between their reserves at Hooker Creek and Yuendumu. The track, red dirt, much of it deep sand, is now being upgraded as a bi-centenary project.

We were fortunate that this year, because of heavy rain, the desert was blooming. Near the gates into Ruby Plains Station, Cassia notabilis (called Cockroach Bush from the resemblance of the seed pods to cockroaches) filled deep gutters washed out by the rain and the yellow balls of the prickly glaucous-leaved Acacia strongylophylla battled with silver-leaved red-flowered Grevillea wickhamii for prominence on the roadside. Acacia hilliana, a ground cover, filled vacant spaces with its yellow spikes. The grass was spinifex, still holding upright its dead seed heads. Where the spinifex had been burnt, the new growth was bright green. Major Mitchell cockatoos flew overhead and bustards stalked arrogantly away.

A road to the left led to the geologically interesting Wolf Creek Meteorite Crater. From its rim the crater looks like a huge basin, lightly vegetated on the sides, with thicker greener shrubbery at the base. It is not spectacular from the rim, but aerial photographs show an interesting formation. It is an easy walk down the sides to the floor and across the bottom. On the stony outside of the walls grew many wattles in flower, the mauve hibiscus-flowered Gossypium australe and the very showy Cassia glutinosa.

Back on the main track again, we passed areas blackened by recent burning. Here many brown falcons perched on the roadside shrubs watching for prey. We stopped to inspect the old gold stamper at the Tanami mines, and in this vicinity saw Hakea macrocarpa heavy with large white flowers. Other hakeas we saw in flower along the track were Hakea eyreana and Hakea arborescens, but a half-dozen species of shrubby wattles laden with bloom dominated the road-verge vegetation. We spent the night at Rabbit Flat. Here an adventurous couple have built a store and caravan park, the only facility on the two days' journey from Halls Creek to Alice Springs. Three claims by Aborigines have been made against the property but so far Jacky and Bruce have succeeded in retaining it.

The next morning we visited the Granites gold mine - now in the process of being reopened - and inspected the Aboriginal peckings on the granite boulders. After leaving the Granites the highest points we saw for kilometres were termite mounds, white-washed by the numerous birds that use them as lookouts. We had lunch at Laraganni, a deserted station that failed because of lack of water. The hopeful owners had planted Flinders and Buffel grass to feed their cattle. Some of it remains but generally spinifex has regained its hold.

Before Mt. Doreen Station we all admired Leptosema chambersii, a low tufted plant that bears its large pea flowers at the base, just above the ground. Mt. Doreen, now absorbed into another cattle station, was first a cattle station then a wolfram mine during the war. It was the home of Doreen Braitling who wrote the haunting song 'Cattle Coming in'. The homestead now is just a heap of junk. Further south, the houses of the Aboriginal settlement of Yuendumu could be glimpsed and, as we neared Alice Springs, we saw both the Jindalee Radio installation and central Mt. Wedge, the geographical centre of Australia.

The Tanami Track is certainly a different way to travel from the north to Alice Springs.

INSPECTION OF OATLEY POINT RESERVE

A number of OFF members recently inspected the work being done by the National Trust Bush Regeneration team at Oatley Point. Present were Pat Akkersdyk, Daphne Hansen, Phyl Bryden, Ida Carder and Bill Hall. Work has included the removal of bitou bush. Lots of work has yet to be done, including removal of lantana, privet and asparagus and we are pleased to note that Kogarah Council has voted funds to continue this valuable work.

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

November 26th (Monday). 7.45 p.m. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, followed by a get-together and supper. Come and support your Society. Hear the report of the Hon. Secretary outlining what has been achieved during the year. Contribute your thoughts during General Business. Elect next year's Committee (perhaps you might even consider standing for the Committee yourself). Please bring a plate to help with supper.

December 1st (Saturday). ANNUAL DINNER. ***SPECIAL NOTE: CHANGE OF VENUE.
Penshurst Bowling Club, Centre St., off Railway Parade. 7 p.m. for 7.30 p.m.
 The speaker will be Neville Gare, Assistant Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. Mr. Gare is an entertaining speaker with a wide experience in conservation matters. He has been a lecturer at the Summer School at Jindabyne, superintendent of Kosciusko National Park and helped establish the National Park's organization in New Guinea.
Cost: Still only \$8 per head, for an excellent 3-course meal.
Important: To assist in catering we must know who will be attending in advance. It is desirable that tickets be paid for in advance, preferably at our next meeting. Bookings can be made through Val Boyan (533 1013, after 4 p.m.) or Ida Carder (57 5909). If you haven't been to an Annual Dinner before, you can be sure of a most enjoyable evening. Just ask anyone who was there last year!

Oatley Park Flower Study Walk. Note: There will be no flower walk in the Park during December, January and February.
 (Right now the flannel flowers in Oatley Park are at their peak - don't miss the display.)

BOOK FAIR - TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

Each year the Total Environment Centre (3rd Floor, Argyle Arts Centre, 18 Argyle Street, Sydney) has a book fair which is an important fund raising event for this voluntary organization. The Fair specialises in a wide range of books on the environment, flora and fauna, rainforests, seashores as well as urban planning and the problems of cities. A stock of children's books, calendars and posters will also be available. From: Saturday 24th November to Friday, 25th January, 1985. Hours: Weekdays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

LIBRARY REPORT

Densy Clyne's More Wildlife in the Suburbs has been added to the library. There will be no library at the A.G.M., but it would be appreciated if borrowed books could be returned at that meeting so the new Librarian can take over.

Added to the magazine box. The latest issue of Habitat (October 1984). It contains articles on 'Western Tasmania - a Wilderness Still Threatened', 'Uranium and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty', 'The Olgas' and 'In Search of the Spirit of Wilderness'.

DAINTREE - WHAT YOU CAN DO

Conservationists are being urged to press their Federal Member of Parliament to:-

- * Ensure quick nomination of the Greater Daintree (350 000 ha) to the World Heritage list. Once nominated, the Australian Government can take action under the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act, 1983.
- * Obtain an undertaking from the Federal Government to stop the current roadworks, involving a 34 km bulldozed swathe through the Daintree wilderness and probable increases in silt loads in the water of the Great Barrier Reef.

Telegrams, telexes, letters or deputations are urgently needed.

DR. BOB BROWN ON DAINTREE

'That wilderness should be there for North Queenslanders; it should be there for people all around Australia; it should be there for everybody around the world. It should be there for the inhabitants of that wilderness, our fellow creatures on this planet who don't have a vote ... If we don't have the humility to consider our fellow creatures in nature, there is no hope for us as part of the realm of nature on this planet.'

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December 1984/January 1985

ANNUAL DINNER

As we have all come to expect, the Annual Dinner was a great success, with about 80 people attending. This was despite the last minute change of venue and the fact that the Government sprung an election on that same day without notifying us in advance. It seemed that the Fates were against us when we had a desperate phone call from our guest speaker, Neville Gare, to say that his car had broken down on the way from Canberra to Sydney and he was stranded in Goulburn. Fortunately, John Blacker and Gwen Helman were able to find a substitute to address the Dinner, as Gwen's son, Peter, had just arrived home from one of his trips.

Peter Helman's credentials as an active and concerned conservationist are beyond reproach, but he also showed that he is an excellent communicator of his concerns by his entertaining and informative talk. Peter has been involved in a pioneer survey of the wilderness areas of south-eastern Australia and on wild and scenic rivers. His recent interest has been in bats, research which took him over most of Australia and led to a number of important and new discoveries. Peter has promised to give a talk to one of our monthly meetings on the interesting aspects of this work. Peter spoke of the cumulative problems facing the Australian environment which he had observed as he travelled around Australia. There are major problems of soil erosion, the slow death of trees, pollution of ground water and the decline of the rivers. He suggested that because these are slow and cumulative, not spectacular nor obvious, governments tended to ignore them and put them in the 'too hard' or 'for later action' baskets. What is needed are decisions NOW, otherwise it might be too late.

Treasurer, Harry Whaite, reports that O.F.F. made just over \$100 profit on the Annual Dinner, so the function was a financial as well as a social success.

Seasons Greetings and best wishes to all were received from long-time member, Merle Hampton, who is now living at Gerringong on the south coast.

URBAN FREEWAYS

Representatives from various community groups, including O.F.F., met at the Total Environment Centre recently to launch a campaign against some undesirable aspects of the Department of Main Roads' (DMR) urban freeway programme. According to many representatives, the DMR's proposals would result in the dislocation and displacement of communities, and the loss of valuable park and bushland. Freeways often are planned to pass through bushland corridors, such as that planned to pass up the Wollie Creek Valley. The fact that the DMR had power to adjudicate its own Environment Impact Studies was deplored. It was generally agreed that the present system did not allow for proper public review of the need for freeways. It was proposed that there be an enquiry into the State transport planning process and that the State Transport Study Groups collaborate in producing alternative transport proposals for Sydney.

Anyone with information relevant to the campaign should contact David Norrie at Total Environment Centre, 27 4714.

Two well-produced and informative booklets are available free of charge from the Water Resources Commission of N.S.W. by phoning 922 0121. They are 'The Role of Water in the Development of N.S.W.' and 'Groundwater in N.S.W.' They contain maps of the drainage basins of all the important rivers in this State.

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Regional Environmental Studies are important prerequisites to the preparation of regional plans which set out guidelines for the protection of valuable environments. Currently there are studies being made of Jamberoo Valley and Parramatta River.

COMING EVENTS

All meetings are held at the Uniting Church Hall, corner Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, Oatley West. Children and visitors are welcome at all meetings and on field days. Please make yourself known as you come in.

First Meeting for 1985

February 4th (Monday). New Year get-together. Members' slides and supper. Bring along 6-10 of your best slides - perhaps beauty spots, plants and animals, environmental problems or OFF trips. A contribution of a plate of food towards supper would be appreciated.

PROGRAMMES WILL BE HANDED OUT AT THIS MEETING.

O.F.F. Library

The Society's library of natural history books has been a feature of our meetings for many years. However, in recent years, fewer and fewer books have been borrowed, probably because local municipal libraries have better catered to the needs of members. It has often been disappointing for the Librarian to carry all those books to the meeting only to find one or two books being borrowed. Therefore, it was proposed at the Annual General Meeting that the library be discontinued. It was suggested, and approved by the meeting, that the books be donated to a Council library to establish a conservation reference section.

The magazines which are received by the Society on a regular basis - such as Habitat, National Parks Journal, Ecos, Australian Plants, Wildlife Australia - will be still available at meetings for members to borrow.

Myall Lakes - Plan of Management

Can you believe a management plan for a national park which allows free access to the beach for 4-wheel drive vehicles, allows power boats to damage delicate lake ecology and proposes a 'network' of new roads to take the car tourist to sites which they could reach by short walks from the present road? Such is the new Plan of Management for Myall Lakes National Park. Many conservation groups, such as the Nature Conservation Council and the Total Environment Centre believe that the plan should be withdrawn. If the plan is implemented, it could mean the steady destruction of the natural values in our most important coastal national park.

Flowers of Oatley Park

The spring flowers were particularly good in Oatley Park last season. There are many flowers also to be seen in summer. Walk through the park in January and you will most likely see some of the following:

Flannel Flower (Actinotus helianthi) - with large, white, woolly flowers.
 Lesser Flannel Flower (A. minor) - smaller flowers; very common.
 Trigger Plant (Stylidium graminifolium) - pink flowers on a long stem.
 Lance-leaf Platysace (P. lanceolata) - white flowers in terminal clusters.
 Blue Lily (Dianella caerulea) - dainty blue flowers with yellow anthers.
 Lobelia (L. dentata) - blue irregular flowers, deeply cut leaves.
 Goodenia (G. hederacea) - small herb, yellow flowers, oval leaves.
 Pink Spider Flower (Grevillea sericea) - common shrub with pink flowers.
 Old Man Banksia (B. serrata) - common small tree with grey-green flowers.
 Christman Bush (Ceratopetalum gummiferum) - reddish sepals persist on bush.
 Match Heads (Comesperma ericinum) - pink terminal flowers; on sheltered slopes.
 Fuchsia Heath (Epacris longifolia) - red bell flowers, tipped with white.
 Narrow-leaf Geebung (Persoonia lineraris) - small yellow flowers on 2m shrub.

O.F.F. members certainly like to get out and see things! Chiew and Alan Fairley have just returned from 10 days in New Zealand's South Island; June and Keith Underwood, Joan and Kim Ford are attending the Summer School at Jindabyne; and it is not very long before Olive and Harry Whaite, Ida Carder, Gwen Helman and May Hooker head for USA and Canada to spend 5 weeks in the national parks.

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