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O.F.F. NEWS

Published by
**OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA
CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.**

Print Post App. No. PP 255003/03239



Price: 10 cents

Issue: 2005/5

May/June 2005

JANET AITKEN

We were saddened to hear of the death of Janet Aitken on 9th April. Janet had been a very active and highly respected member of the Society for more than 20 years. She was also a member of various other organisations and had strong interests in music, ballet and literature.

As a very knowledgeable and experienced bushwalker, Janet was the initiator and leader of a number of our field days. She was also the speaker at some of our monthly meetings, presenting fascinating accounts of her extensive travelling through unusual places such as Mongolia and remote parts of Africa.

She had a science degree from the University of Sydney and was a Senior Scientist at the Prince of Wales Hospital before retiring in the 1980s. The Society extends its deepest sympathies to Janet's brother Jim and his family. (details from Val Boyan)

SAVE BUSHCARE - WRITE TO COUNCIL

The Committee was very concerned to learn that Hurstville Council's draft budget for 2005/6 includes **drastic reductions to the bushcare allocation**. Undoubtedly this will negate much of the good bushcare work in our district in recent years and result in the degradation of areas we have been striving to protect. The draft budget is part of the draft Management Plan 2005/2006 now on display in the Council offices for public comment until 6th June, prior to finalisation on 22nd June. **Members of the Society are asked to respond** to this display with individual letters pointing out the values of local bushland and the need to maintain these values. Modifications of the proposed reductions are still possible if **councillors can be convinced** that enough ratepayers want the bushcare expenditure to continue.

CHANGES IN SPEAKERS

The speakers for May and June have been changed. **Dr Michael Batley** of the Australian Museum will be the speaker at the **next monthly meeting on 23rd May**, and his topic will be 'Native Bees'. Michael is co-author of the award winning book 'Native Bees of the Sydney Region'. Les Bursill will now speak on Aboriginal use of plants at the meeting on 27th June.

50th ANNIVERSARY NOTES

We are pleased to announce that the **Anniversary Mugs** have arrived and will be on sale at the next monthly meeting for \$7.00 each. In **glossy cobalt blue** with our **Grevillea emblem in yellow**, they are a lovely addition to any kitchen (quite suitable, also for both microwave and dishwasher).

Have you noted the date of our **Anniversary Annual Dinner** in your diary? Don't forget to invite family and friends too. It will be on **21st October at Roslyn Gardens** and, with live music from the **Touchwood Band**, promises to be a very special night.

NARROW NECK FIELD DAY, APRIL 30

With brilliant sunshine, despite a forecast for rain, 16 hearty members set off for the **20 km walk along Narrow Neck Fire Trail** to Clear Hill and return. We were well rewarded with stunning views to Lake Burragorang, the Wild Dog Mountains, Kanangra Walls and beyond. There were flowers in bloom such as *Banksia spinulosa* and other species of special interest such as the ground hugging *Persoonia chamaepitys*. Frequent mountain bikes whizzing past were an unexpected thrill (?) that kept us alert and alarmed. But by luck, **all walkers returned safely** and feeling very well exercised. Photos etc on our website at www.off.oatleypark.com (trip leader Lesley Cox).

OATLEY PARK IN MAY/JUNE

Alan Fairley has listed the following plants as flowering in Oatley Park in May/June :

Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*; shrub to 2m, bipinnate leaves, bright yellow flowers)

Sweet-scented Wattle (*Acacia suaveolens*; slender shrub to 2m, pale yellow or cream flowers)

Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*; small crowded leaves, orange-red flower spikes)

Variable Bossiaea (*Bossiaea heterophylla*; shrub to 1m tall, yellow and red pea-type flowers)

White Fingers (*Caladenia catenata*; white ground orchid with a single flower on a 20 cm stem)

Rough Wax-flower (*Philotheca scabra*; white with 5 petals, small shrub on sheltered slopes).

Meetings are held at the **Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street, Oatley.**
(near the corner of Letitia Street)

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm.

Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

Coming Events

May 23rd (Monday) REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING. 7.45 pm. Dr Michael Batley, Australian Museum, will speak on **Native Bees** (note that the original program listing Les Bursill as the speaker has been changed).

May 28th (Saturday) FIELD DAY. KU-RING-GAI CHASE NATIONAL PARK. We will start at the Basin Track carpark (no public transport, unfortunately), walk the track to Mackerel Beach, then on to Resolute Bay, up to the picnic ground and then back to the start along the road. It is about 10km. The attractions are magnificent views of Pittwater and Broken Bay as well as two sets of Aboriginal rock carvings. The Basin carpark is on the right of West Head Road about 10km beyond the park gate (Gregory's map 108 D14). **Meet there at 9.30 am.** Bring bush track shoes, water and lunch. Leaders: Julian and Annette Sheen. Contact them on 9594 4888 for transport help.

June 27th (Monday) REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING. 7.45pm. Les Bursill, Sutherland Shire Aboriginal Archaeologist will speak on **Aboriginal Use of Plants as Food and Medicines.**

OATLEY PARK HERITAGE TOURS

Very successful heritage walks of Oatley Park were conducted by the Society for about 45 people on Sunday, 17th April. **Most participants were local residents** who frequently use the park and wanted to know more about it. Each group of 8 to 10 people was provided with a leader and an assistant. Having been tutored previously by Alan Fairley, the leaders guided their groups, with detailed commentaries, to the various natural and historical features which included:

- the historic 'Lone Pine' from Gallipoli
- site of the 1951 Rover Moot attended by the then Prime Minister R.G. Menzies
- three species of rare and endangered plants
- stone work by 1929-35 depression relief workers
- history of Sandy Bay Baths.

Our thanks to all those involved, particularly Alan Fairley, Graham Austin, Lesley Cox, David Koffel, Val Boyan, Jan Douglas, Peter Cox, Janet Austin, Faye Coughlan and David Crawford.

(from notes by Graham Austin and Joan Bell)

RECYCLING YOUR COMPUTERS

As computers now become quickly outdated, the disposal of old ones is becoming an environmental problem. However, a group called **YCW** (for 'Young Christian Workers') **will recycle some old computers** and peripherals as part of their 'Reboot to reduce eWaste' program. This very worthy scheme includes the training of unemployed people in computer maintenance and the donating of refurbished computers to disadvantaged people and community organisations. **Further information** on the program and on YCW may be obtained from Colin McDermott on 0415 230 980 or by email at reboot@ycw.org.au.

RECYCLING YOUR CORKS AND STAMPS

The conservation benefits of recycling corks and some local collecting depots for **Guides Australia** were mentioned in the January/February O.F.F. News. Since then the Editor has been advised that corks will also be **collected at our monthly meetings** by Lesley Winters, Heather Mackey or Valmai Douglas for recycling by the Guides. Lesley will also collect used **postage stamps for recycling by the Lions** in their 'Sight First Fund' which helps establish clinics in Asia. Each stamp should be cut from the envelope, leaving a small border to protect it from damage.

VERY BRIEFLY

International Day for Biological Diversity: May 22.

Alan Fairley's recent trip, Korea & Japan: May 25, 8pm. Slides, NPA meeting, 123 Flora St. Sutherland.

Orica Community Consultation on groundwater pollution threatening Botany Bay. May 30, 5pm-8pm, Matraville. Details: Lily Robert-Everett 9352 2015.

Wildlife Preservation Society Student Grants: Five grants of \$1000 per year are available for wildlife conservation research by honours or postgraduate tertiary students. Applications close May 31. Details: www.wpsa.org.au/default2.asp?contentID=4

World Environment Day: June 5.

World Oceans Day: June 8.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Estimates of 8 to 10 feral foxes per square kilometre have been made for the inner urban areas of Sydney. Foxes will eat most forms of animal and vegetable matter, are active for up to 20 hours per day, and are one of the most difficult pests to eradicate. (from reports by experts to a recent Canterbury Council meeting on fox control)