



O.F.F. NEWS

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**OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA
CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.**
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50th Anniversary Edition

HOW THE SOCIETY BEGAN

Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society began on **30th November 1955** with a meeting at the home of Rafael and Moyia Kowron. This relatively young couple were delighted with the bushland setting of their Oatley home but were appalled at the continuing destruction of the bushland through vegetation removal, tree felling, rubbish dumping, fire lighting and other acts of vandalism. About 20 other Oatley residents with similar concerns attended the Kowrons' meeting. The subsequent history of the Society and their success in halting the destruction have been recorded in Alan Fairley's 100-page book '**Being Green - The First 50 Years**'. Pre-release copies of this book may be inspected at the next monthly meeting on November 28th (see p.4).

ANNIVERSARY (NAMING DAY) PICNIC

Come along to celebrate a very special day by helping replant the Myra Wall Garden in Oatley Park followed by a very relaxed and informal BYO Picnic at the Castle.

Date: Wednesday, 7th December. THIS IS 50 YEARS TO THE DAY SINCE THE SOCIETY WAS NAMED.

Time:

- for planting, meet 3.45 pm at the Steam Roller Park (BYO gardening gloves)
- for picnic, meet 5.00 pm at the Castle (BYO picnic, including a cup or mug for tea/coffee)

If you would like to help with the planting, please call Lesley on 9579 3782.

We will have a Birthday Cake and the Georges River Community Service have generously offered to serve tea/coffee as well as the cake.

Anniversary Mugs will be on sale at the picnic - so here is a great opportunity to buy, and use, this handsome memento.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY O.F.F.

We have received congratulatory messages from:

- Kevin Greene MP, Member for Georges River
- Nature Conservation Council of NSW
- Hurstville City Council
- Hurstville Labor Women's Committee
- Kogarah Municipal Council
- Daryl Melham MP, Member for Banks
- Betty Weekes of Evans Head, a former O.F.F. News Editor (late 1970s and early 1980s).

ANNUAL DINNER: 'BEST EVER'

Everyone (all 105 of us) at the 50th Anniversary Dinner on 21st October thoroughly enjoyed the evening. One member who had been to most of the Society's annual dinners since the 1960s described it as the 'best ever'. Thanks to the impeccable planning by **Lesley Cox** and her hard-working subcommittee, and the cool, professional competence of MC **Julian Sheen** it 'all went like clockwork'. Every item was a memorable feature: fascinating talks, especially by founder **Rafe Kowron**, and Vice President **Alan Fairley**, the Roll of Honour (see below), the entertainment group Touchwood (with their beautiful harmonising), and the excellent food and beverages. Between speeches and other items, the stimulating atmosphere was maintained by a '**rolling**' slideshow of O.F.F. activities and people, starting with the earliest days and extending to the present time. This marvel of latest technology was arranged and set up by former O.F.F. President **John Winters**, using photographs and pictures provided by many O.F.F. members. It involved the linking of a digital light projector with a portable computer which operated continuously and automatically after initial activation. Thanks to **Faye Coughlan**, our tireless Secretary, a number of really nice gifts were generously donated by local businesses and others for the raffle and lucky door prizes (see below). These were just a few of the many features that contributed to a delightful and fitting climax to our 50th Anniversary celebrations.

ROLL OF HONOUR

At the Anniversary Dinner, **Certificates of Appreciation** were presented to 18 members on our Roll of Honour. This comprises past and present members of O.F.F. Executive (presidents, secretaries and treasurers) and founding members. Notable inclusions amongst the recipients were the first president and secretary, **Rafael and Moyia Kowron**.

Other recipients who have been particularly active O.F.F. members over a long period of time included Harry Whaite, Keith Underwood, June Underwood, Alan Fairley, Val Boyan, Lesley Cox, John Watters and Robin Dickson.

PRIZE DONORS

We are very grateful to the following local businesses for their generous donations of raffle and door prizes at the Anniversary Dinner:

Altra Nursery
Martinello Exquisite Chocolates
Mary Moodies Nursery
Mortdale Cellars
Oatley Bottle Shop
Oatley Hotel

Our Program Officer, **Melina Amerasinghe**, donated the book 'Herbarium' as an additional prize. It had been autographed by the author, Ashley Hay, who spoke at the September O.F.F. meeting.

ANNIVERSARY DISPLAY AT LIBRARY

A display of the Society's activities and achievements, referring particularly to our 50th Anniversary, may be seen at **Penshurst Library**, 630 Forest Road.

THISTLE Y. HARRIS LECTURE

Thistle Y. Harris was a famous writer, botanist and conservationist, especially in the period after World War II. She accepted an invitation to be the **Society's first guest speaker** at one of the earliest meetings on 27th February, 1956. The 50th anniversary of this event coincides with our monthly meeting in February 2006 and we have therefore arranged a special speaker to present a 'Thistle Y. Harris Lecture' on that evening. **Associate Professor Paul Adam** will be the speaker and his topic will be 'Saving the NSW floral heritage: good intentions meet reality'. Paul is a leading authority on Australian wetland biota and spoke on that topic at a Society meeting a few years ago. This time he will reflect on his broader experience as Chairperson of the NSW Government's **Threatened Species Scientific Committee**.

O.F.F. ACHIEVEMENTS 1955-2005

- Continually opposed proposals for Oatley Park which would have destroyed its natural values.
- Raised nearly \$400,000 in grants to rehabilitate local bushland reserves at Yarran Road, Neverfail Bay, Riverwood Park, Poulton Park, Moore Reserve, Myles Dunphy Reserve, Shipwrights Bay and Oatley Pleasure Ground.
- Contributed to campaigns opposing rubbish dumping in Jewfish Bay, Gungah Bay, Poulton Park mangroves and to keep Moore Reserve for passive recreation.
- Assisted in the preparation of leaflets for Hurstville and Kogarah Councils, namely 'Living with Trees' and 'Caring for Bushland Reserves'.
- Continually informed the local community about green issues and developed a conservation ethic through monthly newsletters, expert speakers at monthly meetings, leaflets, and stalls at functions such as Lions Festivals.
- Provided a vehicle for involvement of local people who are interested in environmental matters and wish to act on those interests.
- Acted as a voice for the local community concerned about local policies such as urban consolidation, tree removal, feral animal control, Georges River management and bushland protection.
- Provided a focus for people who wish to meet and walk in a stimulating and friendly atmosphere and, at the same time, to enjoy outdoor activities and learn about the environment.
- Provided input to Councils' policies through written submissions and participation in meetings and committees, for example on the management plans for Oatley Park and Heinrich Reserve, bushfire control plans, environmental plans and the riding of mountain bikes in Oatley Park.
- Negotiated with Hurstville Council and Fire Brigade to develop a Fire Management Plan for Oatley Park.
- Worked on Hurstville Council's Tree Preservation Working Party to develop environmentally friendly policies.
- Contributed to campaigns opposing Helensburgh urban development, Lucas Heights mega-tip, construction of Sailing Club at Vincentia, Holsworthy Airport, sell-off of Commonwealth land at Mill Creek, telecommunication tower in Oatley Park, and other similar issues.
- Financial and moral support to other conservation organizations.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SANDSTONE

Dr Bob Young and **Dr Ann Young**, both O.F.F. members, would know more than anyone else in the world about the sandstone dominating our favourite areas south of the Georges River. As **geoscience experts** at the University of Wollongong, they have been studying sandstone landforms for more than 30 years, and have just completed a book 'Understanding the Scenery - Royal National Park.' We are fortunate in having them as the speakers at our final monthly meeting for 2005 on 28th November (see over). Their talk is titled '**Reading the Landscape - the Woronora Plateau**' and it is sure to enhance our appreciation of the significance of sandstone for our special biota and scenery.

FIRST ISSUE OF O.F.F. NEWS

Alan Fairley was editor of O.F.F. News for 25 years to 2004. Before Alan the editors were Betty Weekes, Olive Whaite, Ida Carder and Beatrice Goldstein. The very first issue was produced by **Beatrice Goldstein** in **February 1968**. It advised of a talk at the following monthly meeting entitled 'A New Approach to Bird Photography' by Donald Trounson. It also gave notice of a 'bird field day' at Scheyville and Pugh's Lagoon to be led by Athol Colemane. Items discussed in the issue included Lake Pedder, the woodchip industry, NSW water pollution control legislation, and mining leases at Colong Caves.

RECOVERY OF THREATENED FLORA

The **Illawarra Regional Threatened Flora Recovery Program** is now progressing well after a dubious start several years ago. It is a co-operative effort between the Department of Environment and Conservation, Natural Heritage Trust and Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, and involves local councils, community groups and landholders.

The Program's activities include surveys and monitoring, weed removal and feral animal control. There are **six target species** scattered through the coastal plain from **Stanwell Park to Nowra**, namely:

- Illawarra Socketwood (*Daphnandra sp. C*)
- Illawarra Ziera (*Ziera granulata*)
- Illawarra Irene (*Irenepharsis typherus*)
- Illawarra Greenhood Orchid (*Pterostylis gibbosa*)
- Pink Rice Flower (*Pimelea spicata*)
- White-flowered Wax Plant (*Cynanchum elegans*).

Detailed information on most of the above species may be found in Alan Fairley's book '**Seldom Seen**'.

NEW TREASURER NEEDED

Our honorary treasurer, Carolyn Cotter, has reminded us that she will not be available for this office after the current year. If you are interested in taking her place please contact her on 9579 6631.

LOCAL FAUNA SIGHTINGS

Well, perhaps not exactly local, but in nearby suburbs across the river. The latest issue of Sutherland Shire's 'Bushcare Link' has reported sightings of a **Koala** at Engadine (in a front yard palm tree !) and **Swamp Wallabies** at Bonnet Bay, Loftus, Heathcote and Engadine.

NEW PLANT FOUND IN OATLEY PARK

A 1-metre tall yellow pea reported flowering in Oatley Park late September turned out to be *Gompholobium grandiflorum* (Large Wedge-pea). Confirmed by Alan Fairley, it is a new record for Oatley Park and an addition to the plant species list. Only two specimens have been found in the Park. Both are on the plateau in the south-western corner of Zone D.

DESALINATION PLANT PROTESTS

Most environmental and conservation organisations in the Sydney area have **expressed concerns** about the proposed Kurnell desalination plant to the Premier and also to Senator Ian Campbell (Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage). They are urging individuals to make similar submissions to the Premier and suggest that some or all of the following points could be mentioned:

- there is much concern about the **lack of an EIS** and the **lack of community consultation**
- the vast amount of electrical power required for desalination and the resulting significant **additions to greenhouse emissions and global warming**
- the need to dispose of a **highly concentrated brine** solution and the potential impacts of this on marine and estuary life
- the impacts of the development on **flora and fauna** at the site of the plant and in adjoining areas
- the impacts on the **Kurnell community** and on the **heritage qualities** of the Kurnell peninsula
- the failure of the NSW Government and water supply authority to fully utilise **other water saving methods** such as recycling, compulsory roof tanks, economic incentives for saving water, and stronger disincentives for wasteful water uses
- the enormous cost to taxpayers of this economically inefficient method of supplying water.

It is also suggested that writers ask what the Government is going to do about these issues and to keep the writers informed of relevant actions and decisions. This is intended to impose a stronger obligation on the Premier to respond.

PAY YOUR SUBSCRIPTION EARLY

As for 2005, the annual subscription for 2006 will be \$25 per person or family (at same addresss). You may pay this early, if you wish, by mailing a cheque to P.O. Box 52 Mortdale 2223 or by giving it to Carolyn at the meeting of 28th November.

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

November 28th (Monday) REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING. 7.45 pm. Ann and Bob Young, geoscience experts, will speak on 'Reading the Landscape - the Woronora Plateau'. This is the last monthly meeting for 2005, ending with a social supper and bargain stall. Please bring a plate of 'finger food' and money for the bargains.

December 7th (Wednesday) ANNIVERSARY PICNIC IN THE PARK AND REPLANTING OF MYRA WALL GARDEN, Oatley Park. For replanting Myra Wall Garden (see p.1), meet 3.45 pm at Steam Roller Park WITH GARDENING GLOVES. For Picnic, meet 5.00 pm at the Castle. Bring your own food and drink. This is a special event to commemorate not only the Anniversary but also the naming of the Society on December 7th 1955.

February 6th (Monday) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. 7.45 pm Election of officers, members slide night and social supper.

February 27th (Monday) REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING. 7.45 pm. This will feature the Thistle Y. Harris Memorial Lecture, commemorating 50 years since the Society was addressed by the eminent conservationist and botanist, Thistle Y. Harris, on February 27th, 1956. It will be given by Associate Professor Paul Adam and is titled 'Saving the NSW floral heritage: good intentions meet reality'. Professor Adam is Head of the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of NSW, and former Chairperson of the Scientific Committee for the NSW Threatened Species and Conservation Act.

LIME KILN BAY CHILDREN'S WALK

At least 20 children with parents, grandparents and other minders turned up to register for our special children's walk around Lime Kiln Bay on October 30th. Unfortunately the weather changed from cloudy and fine to very cloudy and wet so Matt Allison, the walks leader, decided to officially postpone the outing to another day, perhaps early next year.

SNOWY MOUNTAINS 2006

As usual each year in January, members will be able to enjoy a break from summer in Sydney by heading for Smiggins Chalet in the Snowy Mountains.

Dates: Saturday, 14th January to Saturday 21st January.

Cost: \$48 per person per night double or share
\$71 per person per night single.

For more information and bookings please phone **Robin Dickson** on **9580 5663**. If you already have your name on the list please phone Robin to confirm.

YOUR FAVOURITE WALK ?

If you have a favourite **bushland or heritage walk** up to about 12km and are prepared to lead an O.F.F. outing, please contact our Field Officer, **Janet Austin**, on **9579 2375**. Janet is now preparing the program of field days for 2006 and would like to hear from you.

VERY BRIEFLY.....

Coastcare Week, December 1-7. For details see www.landcareaustralia.com.au

Climate Protest Day, Walk against Global Warming, December 3. Meet 11am at Sydney Town Hall and walk to Hyde Park. For more information call Nature Conservation Council on 9279 2466.

Ocean Care Day, December 4. For details email judy.reize@manly.nsw.gov.au

2006: THE WAY FORWARD ?

With globalisation and the ascendancy of continuing economic growth ideology in both Federal and State Governments, many changes are occurring that seem unfavourable to conservation. At our local level these are evident in current issues such as the Port Botany expansion, Kurnell desalination plant, high density urbanisation, and the Mulga Road Coles proposal. To deal successfully with such issues in 2006 **we will need to find better ways of identifying and influencing the people who can make a difference.** We need new and innovative strategies, perhaps through the political system and latest technology, because our traditional methods are now less effective.

(Editor's expansion of a note by Graham Austin)