



O.F.F. NEWS



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NEW PRESIDENT AND COMMITTEE

Congratulations to **Julian Sheen** who was elected our new President at the AGM on 5th February. Congratulations, also, to three elected new Committee members, **Elisabeth Cameron**, **Graham Lalchere**, and **Yvonne Penn**, and to the re-elected members from last year. Full details of our new Committee are in the **2007 Program** of Events which should be **posted to all Society members** with this issue of O.F.F. News. Special tributes were given at the AGM to retiring President Jan Douglas and retiring Committee member David Koffel. Faye Coughlan, our re-elected Secretary, delivered a very thorough and entertaining report on the Society's activities for 2006.

NEXT MEETING: THE OATLEY PROJECT

At the next monthly meeting on 26th February (see overleaf) **Dr Kathy Stewart** from the University of Sydney and some students will give a presentation on **The Oatley Project**. This is an environmental educational project, initiated and supervised by Dr Stewart, in which primary and high school students use **mobile technology** for learning outside the classroom about their **local environment**. A number of Society members have assisted with the project.

OATLEY PARK HERITAGE WALK

O.F.F. members conducted some very successful **guided tours of Oatley Park** in April 2005 as a 50th Anniversary event, and also as part of the National Trust Anniversary celebrations. The tours will be repeated this year on **Sunday, 18th March**. Further details will be announced at the next monthly meeting.

ALARMING DECLINE IN BIODIVERSITY

The revised NSW planning laws are not reducing, but seem to be accelerating the State's **alarming decline** in biodiversity. This is detailed in a new report '**Biodiversity Conservation in NSW**' and is one of the causes of great dissatisfaction with the planning system (see last O.F.F. News). The 35-page report may be obtained free from the **Nature Conservation Council** on 9279 0955 or from www.nccnsw.org.au

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 2007 SUB ?

If not, please post your cheque for \$25 (per person or family) to P.O. Box 52, Mortdale 2223, or pay Lesley Wylie at the meeting on 26th February.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA

Sunday, 4th March

This year, for Clean Up Australia on Sunday 4th March, we will be working on both sides of Lime Kiln Bay **around the Oatley Park footbridge to Peakhurst**. Meet in Yawolloh Reserve (also called Jinna Reserve), Pamela Avenue, Peakhurst at 10am (earlier we'd be hampered by a high tide). Please come along with suitable boots, gloves etc for **as little or as long as you can spare**. A lunch will be provided by Hurstville Council at the Oatley Park castle for all volunteers. (Julian Sheen, Coordinator)

TONKINS' PROPERTY TO BUSH HERITAGE

At the monthly meeting in June last year an inspiring talk was given by Roewen Wishart of the **Australian Bush Heritage Fund**. This is a non-profit organisation that has purchased over 600,000 hectares of land to protect threatened plants and animals. In recent years O.F.F. has made donations to the Fund and some of our members have participated as volunteers in the Fund's program of habitat restoration and maintenance. Our latest link to this worthy and effective organisation is through **Winn and Norm Tonkin** who have been active and very supportive **O.F.F. members since the 1960s**. Their magnificent 1,300 hectare rural property, 'Scottsdale', has become the Fund's most recent acquisition. Located on the upper Murrumbidgee River in southern NSW it provides a rare and particularly valuable conservation corridor between the ecosystems of the Australian Alps and coastal forests. The property also contains a substantial area of **yellow box - red gum woodland**. This is now an endangered ecosystem, poorly represented in reserves, and an important habitat for a number of threatened and vulnerable plant and animal species.

LITTLE TERNS, BIG CRANES

The Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance (with whom O.F.F. is affiliated) recently circulated an email headed 'Little Terns today, big cranes tomorrow'. It told us that **Little Terns had started nesting on Penrhyn Spit** 'right where the new port terminal will be built'. As the Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) is endangered and particularly vulnerable to **dogs, foxes and other predators**, NPWS has temporarily fenced off the area. Although the 9 or 10 fledglings now seem to be faring quite well, their future survival must be regarded as very uncertain with the present and expanding Port Botany activities.

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 children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

Coming Events

February 26 (Monday) REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, 7.45pm. The main feature of the meeting will be a presentation by Dr Kathy Stewart of the University of Sydney and some of her students entitled 'The Oatley Project'. See p 1 for more details.

March 3 (Saturday) FIELD DAY. Milsons Point Wharf to Greenwich Wharf. This is the first section of the Inner Harbour Loop Walk. Great views and the bushland headlands of Balls Point and Berry Island. About 10 km, taking about 4 hours + lunch. Meet at Milsons Point Wharf (next to Luna Park) at 9.45am. Catch 8.39am train from Mortdale, change at Town Hall for Milsons point. Then walk down hill to wharf, or catch the 9.35am ferry from Circular Quay. Leader: Alan Fairley, 9570 8332.

March 18 (Sunday) OATLEY PARK GUIDED HERITAGE TOURS. A repetition of the popular tours conducted for our 50th Anniversary in 2005. Details to be given at the February 26 monthly meeting.

HUNTING IN STATE FORESTS

The Greens, in association with various conservation groups, have organised a campaign against the **NSW Government policy** that allows hunting in most of our State Forests. The policy is supposed to provide a means of eradicating feral animals. However, it is now clear that the Game Council (an organisation to control hunting) has a **vested interest in maintaining the breeding** of feral animals to make their 'sport' sustainable. There have been a number of reports of hunting being 'improved' by the deliberate release of deer and pigs into some forests. Shooting, sometimes with the use of dogs, has also seriously **compromised** the value of the forests for other purposes such as **recreation, conservation and education**. Members who feel strongly about this issue should write to their local MP and the Premier, expressing their concerns. **Information on the Greens' campaign** may be obtained from MP Lee Rhiannon on 9230 3551 or downloaded from www.leerhiannon.org.au

FULL COST OF COAL

As environmental assessments of coal mining in NSW must now consider greenhouse emissions from the burning of the coal (see last issue of O.F.F. News), the **economic cost of the emissions** should also be calculated. This is more than \$85 per tonne according to British economist Sir Nicholas Stern, making the full cost of energy from coal **comparable to the cost of renewable** geothermal, wind and solar energy. The comparison favours renewable energy even more if **additional environmental and health effects** of the coal industry are considered. One increasingly important additional effect is the damage to our river systems by **longwall mining**. Examples of such damage in the Nepean, Hunter and Woronora river systems will be outlined in a later issue of O.F.F. News.

VERY BRIEFLY

'NSW targets for natural resources': talk by Dr John Williams, NSW Natural Resources Commissioner, February 28, Wednesday, 5.15 pm, Clayton Utz, No.1 O'Connell St, Sydney. Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand. Non-members of Institute welcome, admission free. anita.mitchell@wsn.com.au

Climate Change Forum with Peter Debnam (Lib), A. Rahill (ALP), D. Shoebridge (Greens): March 3, Saturday, 1pm, North Bondi Life Saving Club. Details: 9263 0349 or greypower@au.greenpeace.org

Clean Up Australia: March 4, Sunday. O.F.F. to work around Oatley Park footbridge (details overleaf).

Birdwatching walk, Eagle Rock, RNP: March 6, Tuesday, 9.30am-1pm, NPWS Discovery Program, Adults \$12, Children \$9, bookings essential, Visitors Centre 9542 0666 or Program Coordinator 9542 0629.

Seminar on 'Part 3a and the Public Interest' (recent controversial changes to environmental planning): March 7, Wednesday, 6pm, 201 Elizabeth St, Sydney. Speakers: Cate Faehrmann (Nature Conservation Council), Ken Morrison (Property Council), Sam Byrne (Local Government Association). Admission free. Environmental Defender's Office. 9262 6989.

Oatley Lions' 30th Celebration: March 22, Thursday 7pm, Roslyn Gardens, Peakhurst. Further details: Lesley Cox 9579 3782 or Wendy Cornish 9570 5332.

Recommended new book: 'Silencing Dissent' by Clive Hamilton and Sarah Maddison. Describes recent Australian Government suppression of expert findings on environment, conservation etc. 279 pages, \$25 rrp, The Australia Institute, Canberra, (02) 6125 1277.

NOTABLE QUOTE

"The situation in Australia is ironic. We get the most sunshine but burn the most coal." John Harrison, Managing Director, Australia-Wide Solar Ltd.