



# O.F.F. NEWS



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

Print Post App. No. PP 255003/03239

Since 1955

Issue: 2008/5

**OATLEY PARK COMMEMORATIVE -**

**120 YEARS**

May/June 2008

## **OATLEY PARK – 120<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY**

It began in May 1888, and on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1908, one hundred years ago this month, Hurstville Council was vested with the trusteeship of Peakhurst Park. It was renamed Oatley Park on 23 June 1922. Alan Fairley recorded the details in his book *'Being Green - The First 50 Years'*. Jim Gainsford in The Leader of 13<sup>th</sup> May has a feature article on the history and frequently refers to Alan.

### **SPOT LIGHTING AT OATLEY PARK - 2<sup>ND</sup> MAY**

Thirty-five intrepid people joined us. The night was perfect, calm, clear and with no moon. Our first sight was two Common Ringtail Possums emerging from their nest in the pine tree at the top gate. Soon after entering the bottom gate we spied a Brushtail Possum, with its gleaming pink nose, tall pointed ears and black bushy tail. We admired the beautiful pink sculptured bows of the Sydney Red Gums, *Angophora costata*, and the serenade of the crickets. We found a Brushtail peering out from its hollow in the bow of a big old *Angophora*. We saw a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets sheltering in their smaller nest hollow. Around the western side we saw a cricket and house centipede, and over our heads silently dashed an insectivorous microbat. Nearing the area commonly called Steamroller Park we were excited to hear the call of the Powerful Owl, did a couple of calls in reply and then spotted this impressive sized owl looking down at us with its golden eyes. A Brushtail possum scurried off into the undergrowth, perhaps sensing the impending danger, as Powerful Owls prey on possums.

[Report by the Leader, Debbie Andrew]

### **POWERFUL OWL**

The Powerful Owl is on the NSW endangered species list and so we should be particularly grateful that it was prepared to come out for the recent spotlighting.

NCC Image@Julian Robinson



## **MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE**

The last OFF News referred to the former Oatley bowling club site as 'adjacent' to Myles Dunphy Reserve rather than part of it. Several members have since pointed out the error. Letters from Council and a map in the Council offices show that the Bowling Club site is certainly part of the Reserve. This can only reinforce OFF's position that any scheme for other use of the site must be rejected, and that the site be allowed to resume its place as part of that bushland reserve.

### **CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES**

Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority [SMCMA] is a NSW Government agency coordinating and managing Sydney's natural resources. Its projects are funded by the Federal and State Government and the Georges River comprises 61% of all of its waterways. At the OFF April meeting, Erin Dixon and Judy Christie spoke of the CMAs generally, and of SMCMA projects. <http://www.sydney.cma.nsw.gov.au/>

### **HOLLOWS IN TREES**

Debbie Andrew pointed out that it is likely that trees have to be 150-200 years of age before they can provide hollows large enough to house a Brushtail Possum and other wild life, and how important it is to protect the old growth trees and their hollows.

### **WATER RESTRICTIONS**

The Total Environment Centre states that policies relating to water supply should include permanent water restrictions as a crucial demand management tool fostering sustainable water use practices. [http://www.tec.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=447&Itemid=285](http://www.tec.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=447&Itemid=285)

### **KEEP IT LOCAL**

The NSW Government's proposed pro-developer laws are apparently designed to by-pass local government and communities, reduce funding for environmentally friendly services and deny community members a say in local developments. *Keep it Local* has more information and a way to react. Contact them on 9242 4000 or <http://www.keepitlocal.org.au/>

*Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.*

*Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.*

## COMING EVENTS

**May 26th (Monday Meeting)** - 7.45pm Speaker **Martyn Robinson** on "**Backyard Invertebrates**" (Martyn is an Australian Museum Naturalist with great knowledge and enthusiasm for a wide range of organisms), -

**June 1st (\*Sunday\*)** - Field day- **A stroll of discovery through Mt. Tomah Botanic Gardens**-home for over 5000 species of plants from cooler parts of the world and Australian natives. On Bells Line of Road via Bilpin-2hrs drive from Oatley via Richmond. No public transport. Bring morning tea and lunch. A kiosk has food and drinks. Meet at 10.30am at the sundial in the formal garden. Entry fees \$5.50 adults, \$4.40 seniors, \$3.30 children, \$11 family [2+2]. Should be ready to drive home by 3 pm. **Leaders: Robin & Rob Dickson** can be contacted on T95805663 and on the day on mob 0418 410 479

**June 23rd (Monday Meeting)** - 7.45pm **Lloyd Hedges** - **Outback trip to Corner Country**

**June 28th (Saturday)** - Field day **Heathcote National Park** - Waterfall - Lake Talooma - Kingfisher Pool - Yelgun Cave. **Leaders: Joan & Fred Bell**

## BIO-DIVERSITY

Australia is one of only 12 'megadiverse' countries that together account for 75 per cent of the world's total biodiversity. Scientists estimate that the continent is home to more than one million plant and animal species. Many of these are found nowhere else on the planet. Since 1788, some 125 plant and animal species or subspecies are known to have become extinct. More mammals have died out in Australia in the last 200 years than in any other continent. More than 360 of our animal species and around 1240 species of plants are considered threatened. <http://www.wilderness.org>

## BEES' BRAINS

New research has found common honey bees possess highly sophisticated brains and share up to 30 per cent of the same genes as humans. A group of 17 scientists at the University of Queensland have uncovered the findings while studying the tiny bee brain which is the size of a sesame seed. The group has found that bees have many of the same brain-functioning genes as humans and, like humans, have an amazing capacity to learn and remember information. <http://australiangeographic>

## A PLAGUE ON FOXES AND RABBITS!

OFF has approached Hurstville and Kogarah Councils about measures to contain this threat to native wild life. Kogarah Council officers replied that a leaflet is being prepared on what they intend to do about foxes and rabbits, and this will soon be distributed to people near the affected reserves. The leaflet will also be available to any others who ask for it. Interested parties may well start asking Council for a copy!

## OATLEY PARK HISTORY

OFF News of May 1988 has Alan Fairley's detailed history of the Park, and it is largely repeated below. Not included here are Alan's notes on the work carried out in and around the Park during the depression, and on the Army camps located there during World War II. These are also mentioned in Jim Gainsford's article.

## VERY BRIEFLY

↑**Sydney Metropolitan CMA Community Forum 24th May:** Details 02 9895 7898 <http://www.sydney.cma>

**Household Chemical Clean Up 24-25th May** hosted by Hurstville Council. Details 131555 [www.households/mortdale](http://www.households/mortdale) **Community Fair** May 31. Ph 95796322

**World Environment Day:** June 5th a UN event designed to stimulate worldwide awareness of the environment. <http://www.unep.org/wed> .

**World Ocean Day:** June 8. <http://www.oceanday.net/>

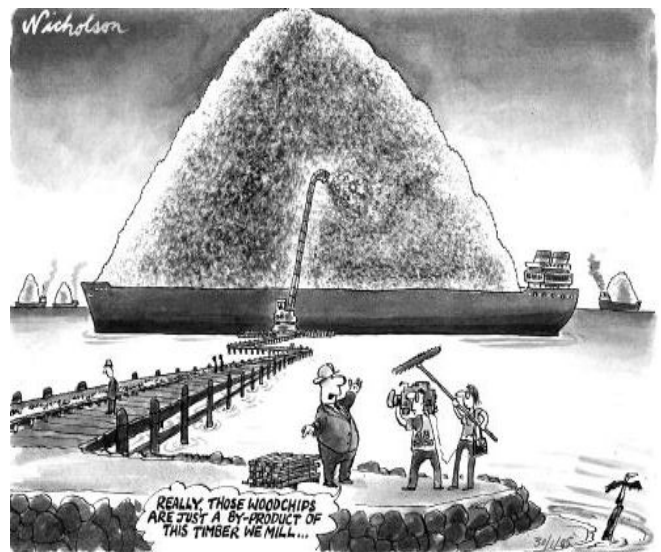
**Australian Plants Society Sutherland** [www.APS Sutherland](http://www.APS.Sutherland)

## BIO-BANKING SCEPTICS

The Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) and Total Environment Centre (TEC) approach the issue of bio-banking with scepticism. The history of offsets in New South Wales and Australia generally has not been a good one, with a strong tendency to inappropriate compensation that has not 'maintained or improved the environment'; with little follow-up and long term assurance; and in some cases, ultimate failure. <http://www.edo.org.au>

## OFF NOTE

Just a by-product!



Courtesy of [www.nicholsoncartoons](http://www.nicholsoncartoons)

## OATLEY PARK 2008

### RECORDED IN OFF NEWS - MAY/JUNE 1988

May 1988 marks 100 years since Oatley Park was proclaimed. As this park is the most significant area of bushland in the St. George district and a major focus of attention in the early years of Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society, here are some important parts of its history.

Oatley Park was dedicated for Public Recreation on March 25, 1887 and proclaimed on May 29, 1888. The Proclamation was printed in the NSW Government Gazette, where, under the Public Parks Act of 1884, Governor Lord Carrington declared 'the land at Limekiln Bay, Georges River, which was dedicated for the purpose of public recreation in Gazette of 25 March 1887 to be a public park... and that it is to be known by the name of 'Peakhurst Park'. Its area was 112 acres. Trustees were to be appointed.

The land from Oatley Park Avenue to Jew Fish Point (116 acres) was the Donnelly Fisher grant. North of Oatley Park Avenue was the John William Alexander White grant, of 81 acres, occupied by Myles McRae, a trustee of the park. White's land was subdivided by 1903.

On September 1, 1906, Hurstville Council requested the Department of Lands to vest the trusteeship of Peakhurst Park in its hands. Letters were sent to the trustees (M. McRae, H. Patrick, J.G. Griffin, J. Sproule and T. Peake) requesting their resignation. This request led to an extraordinary letter to the Council from McRae in which he refused to resign because "your Council some time ago tried their utmost to induce the Government to sell part of (the park), -- because your Council has neglected Mulga Street, leading from the Station to the Park--- [and] absolutely nothing has been done by your Council in making the Park accessible from Mulga Street. The only conclusion I can arrive at is that you don't care a tinker's curse about the Park or its value for recreation purposes." However, by early December 1906, McRae had retreated from his previous position and agreed to resign on the condition that the Park "be preserved for all time intact for recreation purposes, and that the Council improve it as they say they are willing to do." The name of the park was changed to OATLEY PARK on 23 June, 1922.

### HOW OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA BEGAN

OFF began on 30th November 1955 with a meeting at the home of Rafael and Moyia Kowron responding to the destruction of bushland particularly in Oatley Park. About 20 other Oatley residents joined them as the first members. <http://offnews05novdec> Subsequent OFF achievements are listed next.

### O.F.F. ACHIEVEMENTS 1955 - 2008

- Continually opposed proposals threatening Oatley Park's 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, and Poulton Park mangroves and for keeping 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, 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.
- With Hurstville Council and Fire Brigade developed a fire management plan for Oatley Park.
- Worked with Hurstville Council's Tree Preservation Working Party for environmentally friendly policies.
- Opposed Helensburgh urban development, Lucas Heights mega-tip, Sailing Club at Vincentia, Holsworthy Airport, Commonwealth land sell-off at Mill Creek, telecommunication tower in Oatley Park, and other similar issues.
- Provided financial and moral support to other conservation organisations.