



O.F.F. NEWS



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BIODIVERSITY IN THE ILLAWARRA REGION

The NSW Action Plan on Climate Change notes that rising sea levels and extreme storm events are likely to have a major impact on biodiversity in the Illawarra region. Some low-lying coastal areas are at risk from inundation, erosion, or saltwater intrusion into the water table, threatening ecosystems. Coastal freshwater wetlands are likely to be affected by saltwater, existing saline wetlands are likely to be substantially modified, and mangroves are likely to colonise new areas. An increase in fire frequency and intensity, high temperatures, dry spells and heavy downpours are also likely to affect the biota to varying degrees.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/>

500 YEARS OF TREE HISTORY

Tree rings of the snow gum are being used to build a record of the Australian climate back 500 years. "It's ironic how snowy gums [*Eucalyptus pauciflora*] do not like snow," says Dr Matthew Brookhouse, spearheading the study at the Australian National University in Canberra. For that reason, he says, the tree is ideal for observing growth and seasonal change. For decades, tree rings have been used as a kind of clock to indicate the age of trees (even in fossils that are tens of thousands of years old). "Tree rings are typically not very clear in Australia, but they are clear at the alpine tree line in the snowy gum because the trees are so sensitive to the temperature." <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/>

PESTICIDE INFORMATION

The Environmental Defenders Office [EDO] has published *Getting the Drift*, about the use of pesticides on the Northern Rivers. The book, written in conjunction with the National Toxics Network, is a guide for community members and in response to the large number of inquiries the organisation receives about chemical sprays. The forestry, macadamia, sugarcane, and tea tree industries supplied information on which chemicals were used on the Northern Rivers. A copy of the booklet can be downloaded free from the EDO website: www.nsw.edo.org.au

HURSTVILLE COUNCIL - BETTER PRACTICES

Division of Local Government is attending the Council meeting on 24th Nov as part of its *Promoting Better Practices Review*. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

OATLEY BOWLING CLUB - NOVEMBER 2010



SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS COAL THREAT

BHP Billiton revealed that it had dropped plans for mining in the Dharawal State Conservation Area just a day before a scathing review by NSW Planning Assessment Commission. PAC found that the mine would cause unacceptable damage to rivers and creeks in the area. It stated that it is no longer a viable proposition for mining to cause damage to pristine waterways in drinking water catchments. BHP replied in the Illawarra Mercury that while listening to community opposition, it intends further research and mining proposals.

Sharyn Cullis, Secretary of Georges River Environmental Alliance noted the large number of submissions of groups and individuals [including OFF] opposing the undermining of the rivers. Sharyn added that most of the coalition of groups opposing the undermining of Dharawal are now writing to the Minister for the Environment to ask that it be declared a National Park; and that further support from OFF in this regard would be greatly appreciated.

TASMANIAN FORESTS

The Wilderness Society notes that environmentalists have long been trying to protect Tasmania's ancient forests from destruction, and timber workers acted to protect their jobs. However, the Tasmanian timber industry is now apparently close to collapse, and after five months of constructive discussions, a Statement of Principles has been agreed upon by all sides, conservation groups, timber communities, forest unions and the industry. Tasmania is now in a unique position to create a sustainable timber industry, while protecting its remaining native forests. <http://www.wilderness.org.au/>

QUEENSLAND WILD RIVERS

The Federal Opposition hesitated in seeking to overturn the Queensland Wild Rivers Act, saying it needed more time to think through the issues and to talk to Traditional Owners and landholders. Apparently, it was unconvinced by the discussions and is moving against it once more. [Australian Nov 10 - <http://www.wilderness.org.au/>]

BRITAIN BACK AMONG WOODLAND FOLK

The Sunday Times [UK] reports that Britain's tree cover is now 11.8% of total land area. This is at its highest level since about 1750 when the forests were replenished after being grubbed out during the agricultural revolution. It was also before they were denuded again for wood to make ships and charcoal for gunpowder in the Napoleonic wars. The growth is attributed to "new-born greens" and "tax breaks promising that money can grow on trees".

THE OFF AGM

Note that our Annual General Meeting is on Monday 7th February 2011 followed by a social supper. Members with interesting photos are encouraged to bring and display them.

20-25 slides would probably be a good benchmark!

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

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

COMING EVENTS

Nov 22nd (Monday) 7.45pm: Regular monthly meeting with **Graham Fry and Liz Cameron** speaking on Wildlife of Namibia and Northern Botswana. When we think of lions, elephants and zebras, we often think of Kenya and Tanzania but there is also impressive wildlife in less-well-known South-West Africa - in Namibia and Botswana. In addition to its rich savannah fauna, this region has stunning desert scenery, ancient rock carvings, and extensive riverine habitats. Graham and Liz will share their 2009 experiences of this remarkable part of Africa.

Nov 26th (Friday evening) Field day spotlighting in Oatley Park with **Leader: Debbie Andrew** Meet at 7:30 pm at the top gate at Oatley Park Avenue (Sunset is 7:46 pm). Bring a torch, binoculars, camera, warm jumper, mozzie repellent, [and raincoat if]. It will be dark by 8:30 pm; we expect to be out by 10:00pm.

Dec 6th (Monday) OFF Picnic in the Park, This is our annual Christmas get-together. It will be at the "Steamroller Park" from 5.30pm. **BYO** food, drinks, picnic chairs, table etc. Barbecues may not be possible if there is any fire danger. For any queries, ring Liz Cameron 9580 6621

Feb 7th (Monday) 7.45pm Annual General Meeting with the election of officers, members photos and a social supper.

Feb 28th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting.

FIELD DAY COCKATOO ISLAND

Twenty-one enthusiastic members joined the train and ferry to Cockatoo Island on 30th October and enjoyed the unfolding of the history and current plans for this largest of the Sydney Harbour islands. Its troubled past as a punitive prison for difficult convicts was examined on the island's upper level. While on the lower, its role as a highly specialised shipbuilding and repair facility, especially during the world wars, was examined with interest. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day, the views of the surrounding suburbs, the passing yachts in the wild wind, and the social interaction.

[Report by walk leader: John Davoren.]

FLORA, FAUNA, SCIENCE, AND CULTURE

This was the theme of Robin Stacey's talk at the 25th October meeting. Robin presented photographic reproductions of the images of plants and animals collected in the early years of European settlement, by settlers and visitors to this country. The variety and number of the collections showed a high level of interest in the "new" flora and fauna. It is not surprising that studies beginning with people like Joseph Banks, contributed significantly to both our science and culture.

COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT

Two OFF representatives are members of the Hurstville Council's Tree Management Working Party. At its recent meeting, the first for a while, it received a report on current tree management. There were 1197 new street trees and plants, 350 placed at Oatley West Public School, 158 plants pruned, 318 privately owned trees and 63 street trees removed.

THE OFF ANNUAL DINNER

Fifty-four members attended the delightful evening organised by Alison Gilroy and Robin Dickson at the Hurstville Grove RSL. All very much enjoyed Trevor Revis singing *Cootamundra Wattle* and *Starry Starry Night*, songs so in harmony with the spirit of the night.

SILVER JUBILEE 1985 - 2010

HISTORICAL INTEREST 2

**OATLEY - COMO
WALKWAY - BIKEWAY**

This Walkway - Bikeway was officially opened by Federal Members of Parliament, Gary Punch and Robert Tickner, on 15th December 1985, to mark the Centenary of the original Rail Bridge.

Four Oatley Community minded Citizens, Janet and Graham Austin, Noreen Whittaker and Milton Hill, initiated and worked tirelessly to achieve its completion.

KOGARAH MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OATLEY HERITAGE GROUP

OFF COMMITTEE MEMBERS - 2011

There are several vacancies in the present Committee, with provision for 15 elected members. Committee meets monthly, usually on the Monday after the monthly meeting, attending to correspondence, financial matters, policies, and activities. If the idea of becoming a committee member appeals to you, please contact Liz Cameron.

LEAD A FIELD DAY?

If you have a favourite bushland or heritage walk up to 12km and are prepared to lead an O.F.F. outing, please contact our Field Officer, Alison Gilroy, on 9580 5557. Alison is now preparing the program of field days for 2011 and would like to hear from you.

OFF NEWS ON THE WEBSITE

OFF News is now published on the website, and those formerly receiving an e-mail copy will just be reminded to go to the website to read or download it. This month however all members are receiving the newsletter by mail with the notice about fee renewal. New members go to <http://off.oatleypark.com/documents/>

Briefly

Joel Salatin "the world's most innovative farmer" (TIME Magazine), is speaking at the Teachers Federation Conference Centre, Surry Hills, on 23rd Nov, 6:30pm. \$15 entry, tickets on line or at the door if not sold-out. <http://tracking.involvecrm.com/>

Picnic in the Park on Dec 6 [see above]

Coastcare Week Dec 6-12 <http://www.coastcare.com.au/>

SNOWY MOUNTAINS 2011

We would like to know how many members might be interested in our annual trip to Smiggins Chalet for a week, probably February 12th to 19th. [Costs are \$102 double or twin share, \$47 extra adult in room, \$81 single, and \$39 per child]. If you are thinking of going on this trip, please contact Liz Cameron at the next OFF meeting, or on 9580 6621 or Robin Dickson on 9580 5663.

THE CONTINUING CURRICULUM DEBATE

