



O.F.F. NEWS



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MOUNT WHAITE

Mt Whaite is a feature, a rocky rise in what is known as the Blue Labyrinth in the Blue Mountains, south of Wentworth Falls. The area is a tangle of low mountains and deep ravines. Some 550 meters above sea level, it is named after our own Harry Whaite who explored and mapped the area as part of the Warrigal Bushwalking Club in the late 1930s. A group of OFF members including Harry's daughter Jennifer struggled to climb Mt Whaite on 21st October. Access is off the Red Ridge fire trail and the Tableland Road. There is a locked gate and you need to walk about 3.5 km beyond that before you enter the bush. Then you veer left into thick bush. After that the going gets tough because there is no track. The terrain is not especially steep, but the bush is dense and uneven and the line of sight very limited. Navigation is difficult but with Ian Pitt's compass skills we made it to a smooth rock plateau on which there was an old cairn; perhaps one of Harry's mapping markers. From there it is another 600m of thick bush with the "mountain" often out of sight. The climb is not difficult but involves a scramble up rocky escarpments. The summit is a tree-covered dome and around the edge is a cliff line with views of Mt Gibson and wild country all about. We completed the walk, made the climb and managed to return to the cairn and then the road safely. The walk had its challenges and was a suitable celebration of Harry Whaite's long life in conservation. It is expected that next year there be a further expedition to Mt Whaite to leave a memorial to Harry. [Julian Sheen]

BIRDS IN MOORE RESERVE

Kogarah Council has been altering the water levels in the ponds of Moore Reserve and it resulted in a number of unusual sightings of birds as the water alternated from full and deep to low with exposed mud. Seen in late September were 17 White-eyed Ducks, 7 Royal Spoonbills and a flock of 36 or more White Ibis. Nine species of birds were observed in bigger numbers than normal, showing the success of the ponding system. In October, a Moor Hen was nesting on the overflow grate. (David Waterhouse)

FIREWOOD AND BIODIVERSITY

The accelerated and ongoing removal, for firewood and other purposes, of standing dead timber and woody debris on the ground has been recognised internationally as a factor contributing to the decline in biodiversity. This generally involves removal of woody debris and relatively undecayed fallen logs. The loss of this material from woodland sites reduces availability of habitat, of hollows and the input of material to the litter layer. In NSW around 120 species of vertebrates use hollows in trees for nesting or shelter, with many invertebrate species dependent on fallen woody debris for survival. These, and associated fungi and bacteria, play an important role in the decomposition of wood and nutrient cycling in forest and woodland ecosystems. As firewood removal has a significant negative impact on the ecosystem, it is prohibited in national parks. www.environment.nsw.gov.au/

Recent reports of firewood collection in Oatley Park are of concern. If you notice any, please report it to HCC.

CARBON DIOXIDE [CO₂]

Some Sydney climate change sceptics recently scoffed at the idea of human activity contributing to global warming. For them "global warming has stopped", "CO₂ is not a pollutant, but part of the stuff of life", and "if the level of CO₂ were doubled, plants would love it". www.smh.com.au/opinion/

www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/
CO₂ is in fact a very healthy basic part of life – enlivening flora and trapping electromagnetic radiation as heat (noted back in 1896). Its heat retention across the planet is similar to the role of a garden greenhouse, hence "greenhouse gas". Without CO₂ the earth temperature could be -18°C.

However, scientists are of the opinion that increasing the amount of carbon dioxide will raise the heat retention. Containing carbon emissions is not aimed at cooling the planet, but trying to stop it getting too warm. The arguments continue, but ruling out the need for any controls seems similar to our earlier refusal to act on nicotine, aerosols, and asbestos. www.koshland-science-museum.org/

ORGANIC CLOTHING

Organic clothing is made from material grown or raised without the aid of chemicals. With natural fibers obtained from plants, animals or minerals, organic cloth is not subjected to potentially harmful chemicals. While not considered as fashionable as regular clothing, it is now more popular, environmentally friendly, longer lasting than the synthetic, and not a trigger for allergies and rashes. <http://www.goorganic.com.au/>

EXTRACTION OF COAL SEAM GAS

The Environmental Defender's Office [EDO] concludes that the legal regime regulating the exploration and extraction of coal seam gas in NSW lacks independence and rigor, and does not ensure a thorough environmental assessment of these activities. Its report is on line www.edo.org.au/edonsw/

ORCHIDS IN OATLEY



October saw a saprophytic Climbing Orchid (*Erythrorchis cassythoides*) [not this one] emerging from a mulch pile in the small park at the corner of Lansdowne and Baker St. Oatley. It climbed the base of a Smooth-barked Angophora and had many clusters of pale yellow flowers.

SNOWY MOUNTAINS 2012

Our annual trip to Smiggins Chalet is from Sat Jan 28th to Sat 4th Feb. [Costs per night are \$104 double or twin share, \$48 extra adult in room, \$82 single, and \$40 per child]. Please contact Robin Dickson on 9580 5663 for information and booking.

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 18th (Friday) OFF Annual Dinner** South Hurstville R.S.L. [Last minute bookings to Alison Gilroy 9580 5557].
- Nov 26th (Saturday): Field day Wolli Creek - Two Valleys Walk.** This is a Bird Walk, combining with the Menai Wildflower Group. Meet at Bexley Nth railway station at 8am and walk to Tempe station along the valley to see where the Wolli Creek Preservation Society has been remediating degraded bushland. See many birds, and possibly climb Nanny Goat Hill, Turrella. Expected to finish about 1pm; bring morning tea and lunch. **Leaders: Jason Cockayne and Sharon Pearson.**
- Nov 28th (Monday): 7.45pm:** Regular monthly meeting and social supper with **Carl Tippler**, Georges River Health Coordinator, speaking on **Macro Invertebrates of the Georges River and Tributaries**, relating to his research on the health and quality of the aquatic ecosystem
- Dec 12th (Monday) OFF Picnic in the Park**, This is our annual Christmas get-together. It will be in Oatley Park at the Steamroller 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 6^h (Monday) 7.45pm Annual General Meeting** with the election of officers. members photos and a social supper. Members are encouraged to bring and display interesting photos; 22.5 is the recommended benchmark!
- Feb 27th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting.**

GREAT VICTORIA DESERT TALK OCT 24th

Phillip Moore spoke of his recent trip to the Great Victoria Desert. He has made a number of trips to remote areas of Central Australia and is the author of a book on inland plants, so it is not surprising that his talk contained lots of images of a picturesque yet desolate countryside, and interesting flowering plants. He took us to places few of us would ever venture, west from Uluru into the Great Victoria Desert, along tracks flooded from recent rains and back via Lake Eyre. It was a rare chance to experience the beauty of Australia's outback without getting out of our comfort zone.

GARDENS OF STONE WEEKEND OCT 29/30th

After allocation into one of 8 4WD vehicles, 34 people ventured in convoy, on a rainy Saturday morning, from the meeting point at Wallerawang. Leading us was Keith Muir, Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness [note #] who had prepared a program of places to visit, all beautiful, wild, and threatened by either open cut or underground coal mining. All these places are in the proposed Gardens of Stone Stage 2 reserve proposal. We travelled initially through the beautiful (at the present time) Ben Bullen state forest, and had 2 stops and walks out to the edge of the escarpment, with views from the top of the Great Dividing Range to Portland. Stunning pagoda rock formations all along the escarpment are a particular feature of this area. After lunch we visited Newnes State Forest. First stop was Mayinygu Marragu, a site of Aboriginal significance, with artwork in a cave. Then we went up, and over an extremely rough, poorly maintained forest road to the 'Temple Of Doom'. We walked down to the edge of the escarpment, where there were stunning views out over the Wolgan Valley to sandstone cliffs and many fabulous rock formations (pagodas and pillars). Cracks were visible here of rock subsidence occurring after underground long-wall mining. On Saturday evening we toured the Secret Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, where The Australian Ecosystems Foundation [note *] has a breeding program for Eastern Quolls and Dingos. We then enjoyed a delicious dinner at their restaurant.

On Sunday morning we approached the Newnes State Forest from the eastern side, driving onto the plateau through a forest full of profusely flowering waratahs. Our first stop was a walk down to overlook the Carne Creek valley, (more stunning views and pagoda formations overlooking a secluded gorge filled with ferns). We lunched on the side of a beautiful upland (and endangered) swamp. Underground long-wall mining has drained 3 of the swamps already, and this swamp is threatened by further extensions of long wall mining. After driving back to Lithgow, we parted about 3pm. Many thanks to the drivers of all the 4WD vehicles who, for the 2 days, ferried us so safely from place to place! [Report by Alison Gilroy]

Want to lead a field day walk? Contact Alison on 9580 5557

BECOME AN OFF MEMBER!

How can you hear a great speaker every month, keep informed on conservation issues, help protect your environment, meet people in a stimulating and friendly atmosphere, learn about our environment, wildlife and native plants on family-friendly monthly walks, and all for \$25 (family) a year?. Easy! Join Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society. You can obtain an application form from the Membership Officer on 9580 5663, or from off.oatleypark.com/

Briefly:

OFF Committee 2012 We would like to hear from members interested in standing for the committee. If joining the committee appeals, please contact Liz Cameron on 9580 6621.

Membership fees For 2012 members can opt to pay their membership fee by direct bank transfer - [more details when the renewal notice is sent out]. The fee for 2012 will remain at \$25 per family. Donations will be gratefully received; this money is then donated to deserving other conservation bodies. \$2,300 was donated in 2011.

Colong Foundation for Wilderness # is Australia's longest-serving community advocate for wilderness. It monitors NSW wilderness areas, identifies threats and formulates site specific protection remedies. Details and how to join at www.colongwilderness.org.au

Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc. (AEFI) * is a nationally registered Environmental Organisation dedicated to saving Australia's wildlife by protecting habitats and maintaining natural ecological processes. More and joining details at ausecosystems.org.au/

OFF November meeting Regular monthly meeting followed by a social supper. Val and Bev will be providing some craft and jams so don't forget your purse!

Christmas Bush, NSW (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) is fully in flower at the moment in Oatley Park.

Needs more cat training?



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