



O.F.F. NEWS



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THE AGM 7th FEBRUARY

Congratulations to Julian Sheen who was re-elected as President and to the elected committee members, named in the attached 2011 OFF Program. In his presidential address, Julian spoke of Sustainability. He called for a change in our values if we are to attain a level of sustainability providing a good life for all the people on the planet. Sustainability must support a human dignity dependent not just on money, possessions, and consumption, but on what we really require to live well - sufficient food, health, work, and shelter for all people. He noted that here shelter has come to mean an ever-larger house, requiring more energy to heat and cool. He gave this as an example of the failure to address the needs of the many that are so very far from living well. He cited a UK annual survey, *The Wild Bird Count* that is appropriately assessing one element of a self-defining environment. Without authentic sustainability, human dignity is essentially fragile and ephemeral - here today but gone tomorrow

SECRETARY'S REPORT FROM LIZ CAMERON

Oatley Flora & Fauna has a large and loyal membership. Thanks to Robin Dickson's friendliness and efficiency, our membership remained above 300 last year. Alan Fairley oversaw the speakers' program that included the very popular "Birds in Backyards" presentation by Dr Holly Parsons. Alison Gilroy took over as Field Officer from Janet Austin last year and organised 12 very successful field activities that attracted an average of 15 participants. 54 members and friends attended the Annual Dinner organised by Robin Dickson and Alison Gilroy. The December Picnic in Oatley Park attracted many long-time members. OFF's history of actions to protect Oatley Park was summarised by Alan Fairley for the St George Magazine published in July. OFF members contributed actively to national, state, and local programs including Clean Up Australia, Streamwatch, and native plantings at Oatley West PS and in Lime Kiln Bay. Your committee wrote in support of six conservation campaigns by fellow organisations. Successes in issues for which OFF had lobbied included creation of River Red Gum National Parks and Reserves, and the temporary removal of Dharawal SCA from BHP Billiton's plans for longwall mining operations.

The Hurstville Council assured OFF it would be consulted on the Plan for Myles Dunphy Reserve. OFF has representatives on Hurstville Council's Tree Management Working Party and continues working to protect native trees and vegetation. Melina Amerasinghe and Jason Cockayne were instrumental in OFF's successful application for a grant of \$7,000 from the Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative. Aiming to 'Attract Small Birds to Gardens for Greater Catchment Sustainability', OFF is running free 'Birds in Backyards' workshops in 2011 for St George and Sutherland residents, with some native plants and garden advice for the participants.

VALE HARRY WHAITE [1912-2011]

It is with great sadness that we note Harry's passing. Throughout his lifetime, Harry was a champion of the environment and worked constantly to help maintain true environmental integrity. With his scientific background, he was exacting in what he did. He was a passionate bushwalker and photographer, walking with such identities as Paddy Pallin and Myles Dunphy. Walking mainly in the Blue Mountains, he mapped a section of the mountains with a colleague, and in recognition, the Geographical Names Board has registered a Mount Whaite in the Blue Labyrinth area of the Mountains National Park. He was a staunch believer in conservation and rehabilitation, preserving habitat, species diversity, and harmony with nature. In his effort to encourage conservation Harry was actively involved with many environmental and community organisations. He was a dynamic member of OFF; he was on the committee for all of 29 years, and a knowledgeable and popular walk leader. Although in 1999, in his late eighties, he withdrew from the committee, he rarely missed the monthly meetings after that, and the President noted his unusual absence from the February 7th meeting, just hours before he died.

STOPPING DENGUE FEVER

Next year mosquitoes infected with bacteria to stop other mosquitoes transmitting the dengue virus will be released into the wild. Scientists in Australia have found a fruit-fly bacterium called *Wolbachia* that infects *Aedes* mosquitoes, makes them less able to carry the dengue virus, and halves their lifespan when only elderly insects transmit the disease. Some 100 million people in the tropics get dengue fever, and it kills some 40,000 each year. <http://www.newscientist.com/>

MYRTLE RUST

People can easily spread this in infested plant material including cut flowers and nursery stock, on clothing and dirty equipment including containers and pruning shears, and on contaminated timber products. www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/

PHYTOPHTHORA DIEBACK

Phytophthora (pronounced fy-TOFF-thora) is a devastating plant killer attacking plant roots, destroying the food and shelter of many animals. It is a soil borne water mould spreading naturally in water or roots, and unaware humans help it spread. Check on this devastating plant killer before your next walk in the bush. http://www.rbgsvd.nsw.gov.au/plant_info/

Since OFF's program for 2011 is attached, this month's edition is being distributed by post to members. It is also on the website.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE OFF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS WERE IN THE HANDS OF THE AUDITOR AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

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

Feb 28th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Gary Schoer**, Secretary NPA Southern Sydney, speaking on "**Kimberley by Sea**" - an expedition into the lands of the Wandjina and the Gwion Gwion (or Bradshaw) rock art".

March 5th (Saturday), Field Day to Dharawal State Conservation Area-Minerva Pools. Leader: Graham Lalchere T 95803107 [Details below at *Field Day Dharawal*]

Mar 6th (Sunday) Clean Up Australia Day -OFF members and friends will be working in the Myles Dunphy Reserve and Oatley Park. [See *Clean Up Australia* below].

Mar 26th (Saturday) Earth Hour occurs around the World between 8.30 and 9.30pm in the local time zone.

March 28th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Louise Egerton** publisher and co-author of "Wildlife of Australia", speaking on **Counting Our Blessings: Biodiversity in Australia**.

April 2nd (Saturday), Field day to La Perouse to Malabar via Cape Banks and Little Bay. **Leader: Alan Fairley**

April 18th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Matthew Mo** speaking on **Sydney Region Lizards**

May 1st (Sunday), Field day to Lane Cove National Park - Boyles Creek Leaders: Janet & Graham Austin

FIELD DAY DHARAWAL

The Field day on Saturday March 6th involves a relatively easy walk of about 3-4 Km with an option of swimming. Meet at 9.30 am at the locked gate at Victoria Road, Wedderburn (directions available if required). The main part of the walk is to Minerva pool on Stokes Creek. After morning tea [and a swim for those inclined], we may then go to other pools, if the group would like to do so. One of these other pools will be down the steep and very slippery Jingga Track. Only those sure on their feet may want to try this one, but the reward will be worth it, leading to a beautiful large pool with waterfall on O'Hares Creek. Bring hat, lunch and water, strong walking shoes/boots and bush-walking stick, as the tracks may be steep and slippery in places. [Leader: Graham Lalchere, T 0430 968 260.]

LONGWALL MINING UNDER DHARAWAL

BHP is in temporary retreat on its plan of mining under Georges River headwaters, but it is likely to return. An easy way to lobby against the mining is at www.otfordeco.com/Dharawal.

SMIGGIN HOLES -

Some 14 OFF members and friends gathered at Smiggins in mid February. The weather was cool, with cloud, mist and fog, a perfect setting for the alpine area and in contrast to the dreadful weather prior to our departure. Our walks included Mt. Stilwell and beyond, Schlink Pass, Porcupine Rocks, Rainbow Lake, the Waterfall Walk, Palaibo Track, Spencer's Creek, Perisher Village and the Old Summit Road. There were enjoyable drives to Guthega, Island Bend, Jindabyne, Thredbo, Khancoban and Nimitabel. A special treat was a successful evening platypus spotting. On 16th Feb, the day of his funeral, we had a remembrance evening sharing reminiscences of the good times at Smiggins with Harry Whaithe. While visiting the Wild Brumby Schnapps Distillery we were fascinated by a chance display of professional skills by a clever sheep dog demonstrating perfect on-point control over a plastic horse. Once again a great week! [Report by Robin Dickson]

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

On Mar 6th, OFF's team is working in Myles Dunphy Reserve on the northern side. Meet at River Rd, off Mulga Rd from 8.30. Bring hat, gloves, sturdy shoes/boots or gumboots, water, sunscreen, and some rubbish bags. Some are also gathering at Oatley Park at the car park near the Castle at 10.30.

LOCAL PLANTS ON SALE

There will be a small selection of local native plants on sale at the next OFF meeting. They include Bush Pea (*Pultenaea daphnoides*), Eggs and Bacon (*Dillwynia retorta*), Prickly Moses (*Acacia ulicifolia*), Tick Bush (*Kunzea ambigua*) and Red Bottlebrush (*Melaleuca*

hypericifolia). Most are small shrubs and ideal for immediate planting. Price is only \$2.00 per tube. Funds raised will go to help plantings at Oatley West Primary.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2011

Have you paid your membership fee yet? You can opt to pay by direct bank transfer but make sure your name is on the transfer. Bank details are on the membership form. The fee is \$25 per family.

Briefly

The Green Corridors of Southern Sydney, a film produced by the Southern Sydney Branch of NPA is being previewed on Wed 23rd Feb, 8pm, Multi Purpose Centre, 123 Flora Street, Sutherland. Supper served after. [Info from Gary Schoer, 9570 1813]

Australians for Sustainable Development (AfSD) has recently formed to present a united front in opposing the Part 3A planning process and its lack of transparency, particularly at Barangaroo. <http://afsd.org.au/>

Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve, Manooka Plc Kareela is one of the very few specialised gardens in Sydney devoted entirely to Australian native plants. <http://www.anbg.gov.au/>

Henry Gold's wilderness photographs will be on show at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery from May 31st to raise funds for the Colong Foundation [Details later]

Earth Hour is on Saturday March 26th between 8.30- pm and 9.30 pm local time.

Conservation Issues: With the State elections rapidly approaching, electors are encouraged to ask their candidates to define their conservation objectives.

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area embraces over a million hectares of natural bushland extending from the Southern Highlands to the Hunter Valley. A significant report on the area can be found at www.worldheritage.org.au/

Paper choice. The Wilderness Society calls on us not to buy paper produced from our beleaguered native forests. <http://www.wilderness.org.au/articles>

We are being watched!

