



O.F.F. NEWS

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OFF website: <http://off.oatleypark.com/>

GROUND ORCHIDS IN OATLEY PARK

If you walk in Oatley Park in late May or early June and you look carefully at the ground layer, you will probably notice one or more of the five species of terrestrial orchids that flower in the park at this time of year. They occur throughout the park but especially in sheltered shady areas. The most common is Pixie Caps (*Acianthus fornicatus*), with up to 10 tiny green-mauve flowers up a stem less than 20cm tall. White Fingers (*Petalochilus pictus*) may also be spotted. It has a single white to pink flower with petals spread out like fingers. Three Greenhoods flower in late autumn. Sharp Greenhood (*Pterostylis acuminata*) [pictured] gets its name from the long pointed apex of the hood.



Blunt Greenhood (*P. curta*) can be identified by its twisted labellum. Tall Greenhood (*P. longifolia*) may have a stem up to 40cm with about seven pale green flowers. Twenty orchid species have been recorded for Oatley Park. Most flower between September and January but are seldom seen.

FLYING FOXES IN MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE

In late March 2011, over 4000 individual bats were counted in this colony. They do not seem to be using the reserve trees as a nursery as no young have been observed. The flocks of bats flying north over West Oatley may come from the Kareela colony. In the absence of flowering gums, they have been observed feeding on Lilly Pilly and Native Figs.

ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONS IN NSW

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (of which OFF is a member) has expressed concern about the new NSW Government's move to break up the Environment Department and shift responsibility for key environmental decisions to Industry and Investment. CEO Mr P Clarke says that it is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse, potentially compromising the protection of the State's environment. Mr Clarke says, "In coming years there are some significant environment policy decisions facing NSW, from the future of marine parks to regulation of the logging industry. Our community needs full confidence that these decisions will be taken free of undue interference from industry. A healthy resilient environment is a key responsibility of government. We should be asking the new government for assurances that our natural world, marine habitats and urban areas will get the appropriate attention they need for a sustainable future."

Members of OFF Committee will be monitoring the situation carefully.

HOUSEHOLD SUSTAINABILITY

The current NSW Office of Environment & Heritage notes that households consume a significant proportion of available resources each year, and that the decisions about sustainability in the home make a real difference to environmental impacts around the state. Households use 70% of Sydney's total water consumption, and are the second largest users of mains water after agriculture. The average home contains more chemicals than were found in a typical chemistry lab a century ago, and Australians are the second highest waste producers in the world, throwing away 3.3 million tonnes of food a year, equivalent to a quarter of the total food supply. Consumption of resources and commodities continues to grow at rates that cannot be sustained indefinitely, putting pressure on natural resources; economic and social progress that significantly impact on the environment. www.environment.nsw.gov.au/

CONSERVATION HUNTING?

The Fishers and Shooters Party [FSP] in the Upper House of Parliament will be pushing for legislative changes to enhance the activities of licensed shooters, hunters, anglers and 4WD owners, in what they call "conservation hunting". FSP wants the right to shoot feral animals - deer, wild pigs, goats, foxes and rabbits. With some 875 national parks and reserves in NSW, almost 9 per cent of the state, there would be a lot of gunfire facing bushwalkers. FSP also wants game parks on privately owned rural properties, so that visitors can shoot deer and pigs. However, the SMH in reporting this quotes Premier Barry O'Farrell as stating that his government will not be pandering to the demands of the FSP for recreational shooting in national parks, and for the end of marine parks.

GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE AREA

The Heritage Area embraces over a million hectares of natural bushland from the Southern Highlands to the Hunter Valley. From Sydney's back fence, wild escarpments rise westward to the crest of the Great Dividing Range and the farmlands of the Central Tablelands. The Area consists of eight individual nature conservation reserves - Yengo, Wollemi, Gardens of Stone, Blue Mountains, Nattai, Kanangra-Boyd and Thirlmere Lakes National Parks and the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve. The creation of this integrated series of nature conservation reserves protecting the Greater Blue Mountains region represents one of Australia's greatest conservation achievements. Over a fifty-year period from the 1930s to the 1990s, conservationists fought a series of battles against great odds to protect the region's natural ecosystems from exploitation. A dynamic picture of much of this is to be found at <http://www.worldheritage.org.au/>

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

May 23rd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with the speaker, **Brendon Bell** of the Sutherland Astronomical Society. [See the note below]

May 28th (Saturday), Field day: Barren Grounds, Robertson - Cook's Nose 6km, about 3 hours. Meet at 10 am in the picnic area, about 1km from the entrance to the Reserve. The walk is through heath land to a lookout on the escarpment that offers spectacular views. There are some steep sections and the track is likely to be wet in places. Winter-flowering banksias attract a variety of honeyeaters to the area. There is an option of several short walks (1-2 km) close to the picnic area. Bring lunch, water, sunscreen, and wet weather gear. Wear sturdy shoes and a hat. **Walk leaders: Liz Cameron & Graham Fry. 9580 6621 (mob 0427 169 490).**

June 27th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Clive Baker** speaking on **Trekking in Kokoda**

July 2nd (Saturday), Field day: Lane Cove Reserve - fantastic Fungi. Leaders Robin Dickson and the Kearneys

July 25th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Ken Griffiths** speaking on **Photographing Nature**

July 31st (Sunday) Field day: Blue Mountains National Park - Lockley Pylon Leader: Alison Gilroy

August 22nd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Margaret Bradhurst** speaking on **Sydney's Native Orchids - month by month**

August 27th (Saturday), Field day: Royal National Park Burning Palms. Leaders: Julian and Annette Sheen

SYDNEY REGION'S LIZARDS

About 60 people were present at the April meeting to hear Matthew Mo's talk on Sydney's lizards. Special focus was on Matt's research project on the Broad-tailed Gecko in Oatley Heights Park. He examined 14 sites; with up to 30 individual lizards present at some of them. All were on rock outcrops where they liked vertical walls, ceilings, and crevices. Although most were nocturnal, some showed up during daylight hours. One finding was that the lizards do not seem to move very far and appear very territorial.

SUTHERLAND ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Brendon Bell, Education Officer of the Sutherland Astronomical Society Inc (SASI) is our speaker at the May 23rd monthly meeting. SASI started in 1961 with a small group very interested in astronomy, initially called the James Cook Astronomers Club. They constructed the Green Point Observatory on Council land in Oyster Bay in the mid 1960s. The observatory now has a meeting hall seating 50 people, a state-of-the-art 35cm telescope, a 15cm refractor, and a variety of impressive binoculars for members' use. The activities of the Society include Deep Sky, Planetary and Variable star observing, Occultations, Grazes and Eclipses, Photography and CCD imaging as well as Public Education Courses. Brendon will expand on some of these activities as his talk progresses. www.sasi.net.au/

BIRD NOTES FROM OATLEY

A) At the end of March a flock of about 30 Topknot Pigeons (a rainforest species) was seen flying over the railway line near Boundary Road. These birds can travel up and down the coast for 100s of kilometres looking for fruit, but they are seldom seen in Oatley.

B) April and May are the months to look and listen for Yellow-faced Honeyeaters flying over the suburbs. Last year a flock of over 100 of them were seen overhead in Wonoona Parade.

C) In March and early April, chicks of Dusky Moor Hen were still visible in Moore Reserve wetlands with some young Swamp Hens. A pair of Moor Hens nested in an isolated clump of reeds in the middle of the pond. Four chicks hatched but none survived for more than a few days (predators unknown).

WALK IN LIME KILN BUSHLAND SANCTUARY

On 17th April, ten keen bird watchers, including two little grand daughters, braved the threat of heavy rain to go bird spotting in the wetlands. We were fortunate enough to see a small flock of Rose Robins and a circling hawk, abruptly warded off by noisy miners and

aggressive magpies. A nesting Sulphur Crested Cockatoo took over an empty tree hollow, and we saw European Honey Bees taking up another part of the scarce fauna real estate in the park. Overall, we noticed fewer birds after the heavy rain, but as the day warmed up, they began to stir. The changing plant communities along the L.K.B. circuit offer something different every time you do the walk. All had an enjoyable morning. [Report by leader Jason Cockayne]

Briefly

World Ocean Day 8th June. Designation of World Oceans Day by the UN provides an important boost to those organisations and individuals deeply committed to ocean conservation and improving the health of oceans. www.squidoo.com/world-oceans-day

Gardens of Stone are at risk from open cut coal mining. Sat 14th May is to be a day of demonstration to help protect this icon. For more info go to www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/campaigns/

Kurnell Peninsula - a guide to the plants, animals, ecology and landscapes by Virginia Bear. Book launch Thurs 12th May 5.30 Central Library, Belmont St, Sutherland. RSVP: Nerida Gill 9895 7794 or <mailto:nerida.gill@cma.nsw.gov.au> More at <http://xa.yimg.com/>

Australian Plant Society provides great information about our native flora. Details about our neighbours, the East Hills Group of the Society are at <http://easthills.austplants.com.au/>

Images of The Wild: Exhibition of photographs by Henry Gold is on from Tuesday 31 May to Sunday 12 June, 10:00am to 5:00pm daily at Bondi Pavilion Gallery. www.colongwilderness.org.au/GoldGallery/

Ecology of Pymont Peninsula 1788-2008, Tuesday, 7th June, 10.30am Friends Room, State Library for a talk by Dr John Broadbent on his studies of the area. Booking essential 9273 1770 or <mailto:bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au>



Biodiversity!