



O.F.F. NEWS

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

Print Post App. No. PP 255003/03239



Since 1955

Issue 6/11

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

June/July 2011

CANE TOADS FOUND LOCALLY

Cane Toads have been discovered in the ponds of an industrial estate at Taren Point (Sutherland Shire). And they are in large numbers. In November 2010, over 500 were reported and captured. Officers from Sutherland Council, Dept of Conservation and CMA developed a control plan have surveyed at night, used detector dogs and trapped as many as possible. Five Cane Toad Musters have been held using volunteers. Due to these actions the Cane Toad population has been severely decreased and it is hoped to confirm eradication within 3 years.

The alarm has been rung as this population is near a number of other freshwater wetlands, including Kurnell and Golden Bell Frog habitat. And of course, the wetlands around Oatley would be ideal breeding places. Females carrying tens of thousands of eggs have been captured. Given how quickly they have spread in Northern Australia and caused the mass death of local native fauna, we all should be concerned. Local Councils are on the front line for surveying and control and the State Government should be providing adequate funds for effective control measures.

THREAT TO GARDENS OF STONE N.P.

In December 2010, Coalpac announced a proposal to open cut mine 1088 ha of Ben Bullen State Forest adjoining the Gardens of Stone National Park just north of Lithgow. If approved, heaps of waste rock will replace the scenic woodland vistas along the highway near Cullen Bullen village. It would mean the loss of Box Gum Woodland listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community and Vulnerable *Eucalyptus cannonii* woodland. There has been no scientific assessment of plant species richness of the lands to be cleared. If approved, the open cut would have highwall faces up to 100 metres high directly adjoining the scenic pagoda features for which this area is famous. The mine will be in an area proposed as Stage 2 of Gardens of Stone.

OFF members can keep up to date with the progress of this proposal by contacting Keith Muir at Colong Foundation or logging in to Blue Mts Conservation Society at www.bluemountains.org.au. Or write to The Hon Barry O'Farrell at Parliament House, Sydney asking him to ban open cut mining in Ben Bullen SF.

OFF has a field weekend to Gardens of Stone on 29-30 October so we can see the area for ourselves. More in next OFF News.

WALKS REPORTS

We had a beautiful sunny Autumn day to walk down Day Rd Cheltenham to our daughter's home for a generous morning tea. Afterwards 15 walkers wandered through "AHIMSA" to the "Hut of Happy Omen" to hear about its builder Marie Byles. We then continued along Byles & Devlin's creek through pristine bushland crossing 4 creeks without incident noting the damage done by the recent heavy rains. After a leisurely lunch we retraced our steps back to the train.

[Report by Janet Austin]

BARREN GROUNDS NR – COOK'S NOSE TK

Saturday 28th May

Fine mild weather attracted 17 to Barren Grounds, including a French university student interested in birds. On a short diversion to admire the view from Illawarra Lookout we encountered a lethargic Highland Copperhead soaking up a patch of sun, and a fresh wombat burrow. Honeyeaters were busy in the amber and golden flower heads of *Banksia ericifolia* and the French lass spotted a family of Southern Emu-wrens. The track to Cook's Nose, where we lunched, was muddy and rather slippery but the lookout afforded panoramic views of the Kangaroo and Shoalhaven Valleys. A Grey Goshawk glided past at eye-level and an apple rolled over the edge, eliciting a cry of 'Rock'.

[Report by leaders Liz Cameron & Graham Fry].

OFF Hon. Secretary: Liz Cameron, P.O. Box 52 Mortdale 2223 Ph: 9580 6621 <mailto:off@oatleypark.com>;

Guest Editor : Alan Fairley

COMING EVENTS

June 27 (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting. Clive Baker speaking on "Trekking the Kokoda Track". Clive first walked the Kokoda Track in the mid 1980s, beginning a love of Papua-New Guinea and its villages, people, battlefields and trekking. He has written the "Kokoda Trek" walking guide and co-authored "Battle of Milne Bay". He operates a self-publishing book business with over 200 books on Australians at war and runs his mail-order War Book Shop. He will have a few of his "Kokoda Trek" book at the meeting.

July 2 (Saturday), Field day: Fantastic Fungi with Robin Dickson and the Kearneys. Special Arrangements. See Below.

June 25th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting. Ken Griffiths. Photographing Nature.

OFF'S COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Members of the Society have been involved with the activities of other groups over the last two months.

*Jason Cockayne led a Birds in Backyards walk around Lime Kiln Bay and Liz Cameron and Graham Fry led one around Poulton Park.

*Members continue to attend the monthly Stream Watch activity in Myles Dunphy Reserve.

*Sharon Cullis led a group to study stream invertebrates at Dharawal SCA, a Georges River Combined Councils initiative. An article about Sharon's work appeared in "The Leader".

*Alan Fairley spoke to two separate groups in Oatley Park as part of Hurstville Council's Heritage activities.

* Liz and Alan spoke to a group from the Australian Indian Network in Oatley Park.

OATLEY PARK THIS MONTH

Some plants flowering in Oatley Park in June/July.

Red Five Corners (*Styphelia tubiflora*). Small shrub with pointed leaves and conspicuous red tubular flowers. Plateau and slopes.

Black-eyed Susan (*Tetratheca ericifolia*). A small shrub with whorled leaves; flowers pink with 4 petals and a dark centre. On the plateau near the lookout but uncommon.

Needle Bush (*Hakea sericea*). A medium shrub with needle-like leaves and abundant white flowers. Found chiefly on the plateau.

Finger Orchid (*Petalochilus pictus*). Formerly called *Caladenia*. Ground orchid to 30 cm tall with white to pink flowers. Plateau and slopes.

Coneseeds (*Isopogon anemonifolius*). Erect shrub with stiff divided leaves. Flowers yellow on terminal cone-like heads. Widespread on plateau.

See the full Oatley Park list (over 300 species) in *Native Plants of Oatley Park* - \$4.00 at meeting night or see it on the web site : off.oatleypark.com

NEXT OFF FIELD DAY

Saturday July 2nd. Fungi Walk in Lane Cove Bushland Park with Ray and Elma Kearney. (We will remember their talk to OFF meeting in June 2010). We will observe seasonal & endangered fungi in the Hygrophoraceae Family. Meet 9.30am at the Osborne Park Kindergarten Centre – the upper building adjacent to the tennis court – in a lane called Osborne Place off Richardson St in Lane Cove. (Park at the back of the tennis courts).

Allow about 1 hour to drive from Oatley. Morning tea/coffee & biscuits will be provided. After which we will spend about 2 hours in the park for our observations. Walking is mainly on bushland tracks with a couple of inclines – quite suitable for persons of average fitness levels. There may be some slippery patches if the weather is damp. Lunch and discussion will be held back at the Centre, finishing about 1.30pm. Bring lunch, water, wet weather gear and a mug. **Booking is essential. Ring Robin Dickson, 9580 5663, mob. 0459 340 133.** The Kearneys want to know numbers, so please ring Robin by Thursday 30th June if you plan to attend.

MEMORIES OF WIRRIMBIRRA

We have been contacted by Chris Lloyd who has been employed by the National Trust to develop a strategic plan for Wirrimbirra Sanctuary at Bargo. Given OFF's long association with Wirrimbirra (we used to have work parties there and Thistle Harris was our very first speaker at an OFF meeting), he wonders if any OFF member has recollections of Wirrimbirra's early days so he can retrace some of its early history. Contact Chris on chris.lloyd@wiyanga.com.au. (Chris' mother Alice Lloyd was OFF Hon. Secretary in 1970 and 1971. Now aged 86 and living in Brisbane, she still remembers the friends she made in the Society.)

BIRD WALK IN POULTON PARK

Sunday 8th May

Twelve people attended this walk, which complemented the Birds in Backyards workshops that Holly Parsons of Birds Australia is running for OFF's *getting greener* program. We pointed out the small birds that might be attracted to gardens if a variety of native shrubs were planted for food and shelter. A male Golden Whistler was the first sighting and Superb Fairy Wrens, Red-browed Finches, Eastern Spinebills and Silveryeyes were also seen. On the mangrove boardwalk Lesley Cox pointed out a sign recognising the contribution of OFF to the protection of Poulton Park. The walk finished with morning tea in our sunny backyard.

[Report by leaders Liz Cameron & Graham Fry]