



O.F.F. NEWS



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CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.**

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Jan/Feb 2012

AGM FIRST MEETING OF 2012

Best wishes for 2012 to all our members and friends are extended by the 2011 Committee. The first meeting this year will be the Annual General Meeting on Monday, 6th February, when the 2012 office bearers and Committee will be elected. We would like to hear from anyone interested in joining the committee. The meeting will be followed by slides/pictures and a light supper. Members are encouraged to bring and display interesting photos; 22.5 is the recommended benchmark for slides!

THE AUSTINS

It is noted with regret that Graham and Janet Austin are stepping down from the OFF Committee after their 11 years of very active and much appreciated participation.

GEORGES RIVER



The lower reaches of Georges River

The Georges River begins its journey approximately 60km south-west of Sydney in the town of Appin. From here the river flows north towards Liverpool, through the Chipping Norton Lakes Scheme, then east until it reaches Botany Bay. It

was an important focal point for Aboriginal life and culture in the southern Sydney region, offering both food, transport and dreamtime links. The early 1800's saw European settlers migrating to areas along the river and it became increasingly important as a transport route. There is some evidence of agriculture associated with early settlement, but this was limited by the ruggedness of the landscape and limited suitability for farming. Widespread clearing and expansion of urban development after WWII changed the landscape of the river and impacted on water quality. The prevailing view at the time was that intertidal areas (wetlands and swamps) were wastelands, unsightly and a threat to public health. Removing mangroves made it easier to dump waste to raise the ground to a "healthy" level suitable for sports grounds. Opposition to this devastation led to the establishment of O.F.F. and other environmental groups from the 1950s. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) was established in 1967 and the Georges River Combined Councils Committee [GRCCC] in the 1970s. www.georgesriver.org.au/

NATIVE VEGETATION - GEORGES RIVER NP

Georges River National Park (NP) is a small urban reserve of over 500 hectares with fifteen disconnected portions of mostly vegetated land that lie north and south of the river between Sandy Point and Salt Pan Creek, Lugarno. North of the river, the Park lies within an urban-residential setting. The largest portion of the reserve is on the southern banks between Sandy Point and Mill Creek, and its southern boundary links to the Woronora Plateau. The first declaration of the Georges River reserve was in 1962 responding to dramatic human induced changes to the

catchment area. It was designated a national Park in 1992. Some remarkably undisturbed examples of the original environments remain. However, despite its proximity to a large urban population, the native vegetation had not been the focus of a detailed vegetation mapping study. NPWS saw the need for such a study with the results to be added to a recently completed map of native vegetation across the Sydney Catchment Area (SMCMA). This study has now been completed. The first draft of its report was published in November; the final report will be out soon. www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parkmanagement/

DHARAWAL STATE CONSERVATION AREA

"The Bulli Seam Operations, BHP'S 30 year plan to longwall coalmine in the Appin to Wollondilly region, was approved 3 days before Christmas. The plan has been modified from its original proposal and now excludes any mining activity in more than 98% of the Area.

The government has announced its intention to declare the Area a National Park, to the centre of the earth, making it safe from both longwall coal mining and Coal Seam Gas drilling. No compensation for the loss of mining leases will be paid to BHP. This is a further gain as it sets a precedent, hopefully, where mining leases, issued before full awareness of longwall mining impacts were realized, threaten other natural areas.

Whilst this has been, overall, good news for Dharawal which contains the O'Hares Creek catchment, the substantial and pristine headwaters of the Georges River, other troubling issues around the approval remain unresolved. For example, the huge coal dump which will continue to swallow up the Brennans Creek valley will obliterate known habitat of the Southern brown bandicoot, a federally listed rare species. Also the discharge from the coal wash dam on Brennans Creek is currently highly saline and alkaline. Levels of salt measured at 10 times the background level have been noted as discharging into the upper Georges River. Ecologically this is unacceptable given there have been recent recordings downstream of both Macquarie Perch, a rare fish species, and very exciting recent sightings of Platypus in the Georges River around Kentlyn near Campbelltown. Excessively salty water kills the macro-invertebrates upon which Platypus feed. We still await the final gazettal of Dharawal National park, hopefully now only held up by slow bureaucratic process." [Sharyn Cullis, Secretary of the Georges River Environmental Alliance, OFF member.]

THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

The amendment [voting 14th Feb] would establish an accreditation scheme for ecological consultants. Currently, without any such standards, consultants are being heavily pressured to tailor their findings in favour of developments. Indications of community support will help pass the amendment designed to stop dodgy assessments for buildings and mines. [Blue Mountains Conservation Society suggests notes to local members and Minister for Environment & Heritage robyn.parker@parliament.nsw.gov.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

Jan 28th Annual Trip to Smiggins.

Feb 6^h (Mon) 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 for slides!

Feb 27th (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Kirstin Proft, Biodiversity Conservation Officer from National Parks Association of NSW speaking on **The Importance of Wildlife Corridors**, maintaining connectivity between bushland to help ensure species diversity.

Mar 4th (Sun) Clean Up Australia Day 2012.

Mar 10th (Sat) Field Day to Taronga Zoo, with a special guided tour of the Reptile House. **Leaders Robin and Rob Dickson** ph. 95805663. Details will be available at the next meeting

AUDITED FINANCIAL SUMMARY OF OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC. FOR YEAR ENDED 31.12.11. Lesley Wylie, Hon. Treasurer

Credit	Balance-	
01.01.11		\$6,842.82
Receipts		
Subscriptions	\$3,975.00	
Donations	\$1,229.00	
Sale - Plants	\$93.00	
Annual Dinner	\$1,450.00	
Annual Dinner Raffle	\$76.00	
Sale - O.F.F. Caps	\$45.00	
Sale - Being Green	\$10.00	
Meeting Stall Sales	\$135.90	
Interest	\$1.41	
Oatley Lions Festival Refund	\$120.00	
Total Receipts		\$7135.31
Payments		
Department Fair		
Trading	\$48.00	
Corporations Act	\$49.50	
Printing/Postage	\$786.88	
Australia Post Box Rental	\$86.00	
Printing Programs	\$244.30	
Annual Dinner	\$1,339.00	
Insurance	\$749.52	
NCC Membership	\$200.00	
Donations (see Note)	\$2,600.00	
Lions Oatley Festival Stall	\$120.00	
Travel costs	\$152.51	
Lithgow Costs	\$170.00	
Oatley Uniting Church Hall Hire	\$378.00	
Sundries	\$121.70	
Total Payments		\$7,045.41
Balance at 31/12/2011		\$6,932.72
Add Term Deposit A/c		\$9,345.31
Total Society Funds		\$16,278.03

Note: Donations: (\$500) Australian Bush Heritage, (\$350) Colong Foundation, (\$300) Birds Australia, WIRES, Kuringai Bats, and Wilderness Society, (\$200) Total Environment Centre, and Sydney Wildlife, (\$100) Blue Mountains Conservation Society, (\$50) Florentine Protection Society
The Society's funds at 31.12.11 of \$16,278.03 include \$868 in *The Presidents Fund* for donations to other environmental bodies.

Included in the Society's funds are 2012 Subscriptions of \$1,675 in advance. Generous donations of \$634 were received with those Subscriptions, to go in the President's Fund - Thank you.

Members' donations are gratefully received and then donated on to other deserving conservation bodies.

UNCOMMON ORCHID IN OATLEY PARK

Oatley Park is a tree-covered peninsula almost surrounded by the estuarine waters of the lower Georges River. Viewed from a distance, it rises from the water as a steep bushy prominence. Covering an area of 45 hectares, it is the most significant area of bushland remaining in the St George district. Its importance as a sanctuary for native flora and fauna is increased because it is linked by bush corridors around Lime Kiln Bay to narrow but substantial reserves fringing South Peakhurst and Lugarno.

On 17th Jan, a group walking on the Headland Track in Oatley Park spotted the uncommon ground orchid *Calochilus gracillimus* (Slender Beard Orchid). It was not at a time when one expects to see orchids, and it will be added to the list of *Native Plants in Oatley Park*, as the twenty first orchid species. off.oatleypark.com/flora It has a stem about 30 cm tall with up to 9 flowers. Each flower is narrow, with conspicuous deep purple hairs (like a beard), ending in a naked "tail".



THE AUSTRALIAN ECOSYSTEMS FOUNDATION, Inc.

AEFI is now protecting the amazing Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve in the Blue Mountains. The reserve consists of 250 hectares of natural heath, forest and rainforest strategically located between the Lithgow urban environment and the largest national park system in NSW. Once home to rock-wallabies, bandicoots and quolls AEFI is now working hard to reduce the threats from feral cats, foxes and goats to protect the wildlife within this reserve. It is seeking new members and will soon have a new web site. ausecosystems.org.au/

Briefly

Membership fees for 2012 Members may opt to pay their membership fee by direct bank transfer - [details in the renewal notice]. **Please include your name** if you pay by direct transfer. The fee for 2012 remains at \$25 per family

Happy New Year

