



O.F.F. NEWS



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ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER'S OFFICE (EDO)

The EDO is in danger of losing the government funding it needs to continue its valuable work. With over 25 years' experience in environmental law, it has a proven track record. Its role in assisting and supporting the community on environmental, heritage, development and planning issues, providing free legal advice, workshops and court cases is critical for ensuring community participation and confidence in the environmental planning system. The NSW community will be greatly disadvantaged by the loss of the only legal centre in the State providing such specialist services. You are encouraged to write to the Premier and others, stating your concerns. www.edo.org.au/edonsw/ www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site/pdf/annualreports/

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Biodiversity, or biological diversity, is the variety of all species on earth. It is the different plants, animals and microorganisms, their genes, and the terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems of which they are a part. Biodiversity is essential for our existence. It provides the fundamental building blocks for the many goods and services needed for a healthy environment. These include clean air, fresh water and food products, as well as the many other products such as timber and fiber. Other important services provided by our biodiversity include recreational, cultural and spiritual nourishment that maintain our personal and social wellbeing. Looking after our biodiversity is an important task for all people. Over the last 200 years, Australia has suffered the largest documented decline in biodiversity of any continent, and despite efforts to manage threats, it is still in decline. <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/>

AN EAGLE HAS LANDED

Sydney still has large birds of prey living in its suburbs. A pair of White-breasted Sea eagles has successfully nested for a number of years at Newington Nature Reserve, and Birdlife Australia's Discovery Centre cameras monitor the nest. www.sea-eaglecam.org/video.html. On 14th Oct, OFF members Liz Cameron and Graham Fry were on volunteer duty at the Discovery Centre when the camera showed that one of the two chicks in the nest was severely distressed. An immediate attempted rescue failed as the climber could not get to the nest, 20m above the ground. The next day, a cherry picker enabled Graham, with his bird handling experience to carry out the rescue. The bird had ingested a fishhook from a fish brought in by its parents. A vet removed the hook with a small incision in the throat; the bird stayed at the animal hospital overnight, returning to the nest the next day.

The two 8-week-old birds each weigh 2.5kg. and have a wingspan of over a metre. There was concern that the usually very caring parents might abandon the nest, but the mother was back feeding on the same day. They continue to flourish; the sick bird is healthy and should be ready to fly in a few weeks.

The vet advised that it is becoming quite common to have birds brought in due to swallowing fishhooks. This was a successful outcome, but without the intervention, the bird would have died. It was a great privilege to be able to take part in the rescue. [Report by Graham Fry]. For a dramatic presentation of this event go to: www.youtube.com/

BIRDS OF OATLEY PARK

The park provides a sanctuary for many species of birds, some of which nest within its boundaries. Others simply use the park and its tidal boundaries as part of their wider search for food and shelter, returning regularly to the park, but nesting elsewhere. A number of migratory birds also find the bush-covered peninsula a convenient stopover on their long flights. It is difficult to say exactly how many species occur within the park and around its edges at any single moment and numbers fluctuate depending on such variables as time of year and availability of food. A number of lists of birds of the park have been made over the years by OFF. 115 different species were recorded between 1973 and 75, but many listed then have not been seen recently or appear rarely. The improvement to Lime Kiln wetlands has attracted a number of species not previously recorded for the area. 145 are now species listed on the website. <http://off.oatleypark.com/birdsofoatleypark.html>

NEW LOGO FOR THE SOCIETY

Last year a sub-committee of OFF developed guidelines for creating a new logo, and this year we invited local graphic designers to submit designs. Tim James' striking design of a magpie's head superimposed on a flannel flower (a common and iconic plant in Oatley Park) has been selected. We are in the process of incorporating versions of the new logo for OFF News [the first try is as above], our website, and our letterhead.



SUSTAINABLE WATER

Clean water is essential for life, but most people in the developed world do not think much about water use [even if ever increasing demand will require more dams]. In developing nations, the search for safe drinking water can be a daily crisis. Millions die each year, mostly children, from preventable diseases from contaminated water and little sanitation. Freshwater scarcity is a growing problem, with the depletion of groundwater, and drying up of rivers, lakes, and irrigation on which people depend to grow their food. Due to the dedicated efforts of governments and NGOs since the 1992 Earth Summit, safe drinking water has been made available to an additional 1.7 billion people, with projects ranging from modern piped plumbing to rainwater collection and storage. However, an estimated 880 million people still do not have regular access to clean water, and 2.7 billion are without adequate sanitation. Policymakers will struggle to lower these numbers as the planet's population rises by an expected three billion in the next 50 to 75 years. About 5,000 children die each day from preventable diseases spread by contaminated water. There is fierce competition for clean water. Agriculture claims the lion's share of freshwater worldwide, soaking up some 70% and industry 22%. environment.nationalgeographic.com

FORESTS: PILLIGA SCRUB

The Wilderness Society notes that the Pilliga Scrub, of over 500,000 hectares is one of 15 national biodiversity hotspots identified by the Federal Government. Mining company Eastern Star Gas wants to turn the Pilliga into a massive industrial development zone. Its initial plan is for a huge 1100 well coal seam gas development, fragmenting some 85,000 hectares of forest. www.wilderness.org.au/

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St Oatley [cnr Letitia St] starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday. Visitors and accompanied children are welcome at meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

Nov 26th (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and a social supper [please bring a plate].

Dr Garry Darby will be speaking on **Aboriginal Art**. He is an Art Historian from the University of Sydney, with three degrees in Art History. He lectures in a wide range of art-historical subjects such as Modernism, Australian Art, Italian Renaissance and French Impressionism, but his specialty is Australian Aboriginal Art.

Dec 1st (Sat) Field Day to Warragamba Dam. Meet outside the visitors centre at Warragamba dam at 10.30. It is about 1 hour from Oatley, via M5, M7, and Elizabeth Drive. Take the ED exit from M7, go left and proceed to the end of Elizabeth Dr, turn left at the roundabout, then first right to Park Rd. Follow the Warragamba dam signs, and end up at the visitors centre at the dam. It will take about 2 hours to see the exhibits, but sadly, there will be no access to the dam wall during this visit. We will BYO lunch in the dam's picnic area, and then there will be an optional side trip going to Bents basin for a walk up a hill to get some district views. **Leader: Alison Gilroy**

Dec 3rd (Mon) 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 are available if there is no fire alert announced. For any queries, ring Liz Cameron 9580 6621.

Feb 4th (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!

TALK ON THE SIMPSON DESERT

ON 22nd October Dr Glenda Wardle, botanist and joint leader of Desert Ecology Research Group at University of Sydney gave a fascinating presentation on boom and bust cycles in the Simpson Desert, following one of the longest (22 years) and most comprehensive arid zone research projects in Australia. Carpets of wildflowers and graphs of hundreds of interactions between flowers and their myriad insect pollinators illustrated the response to extreme rainfall in 2011. There was a 600-fold increase in some flowers and seeds and an eruption of Australian long-haired rats that were discovered to prey on other small mammals. A highlight of the presentation was video, filmed by torchlight, of mice feverishly nibbling on green pea flowers on the crown of a shrub. ! [Summary Matt Allison Program Manager]

CAPERTEE NP WEEKEND - OCT 27TH

Twelve headed to Capertee National Park for the weekend. The days were mild to cool, and we enjoyed the beautiful vista to Black Mountain in Murrumbidgee State Conservation Area at sunset. We then nestled around the fire in the "Port Macquarie" homestead, in the cool evening. We did two easy-going walks, one along the beautifully cropped (by wombats and kangaroos) grassy *Microlena* banks of the Ulumbra Creek flowing from the western crown lands into Capertee NP. The crystal clear pools flow over a river stone bed and grand old River Oaks (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) providing shady resting spots. The next day we walked along the shaded banks of the Capertee River, east from the caretaker's cottage, to a potential swimming spot at Policeman's Point. Distances covered were not great; our priority was on spotting birds and plants.



We saw some 75 bird species over the weekend, with 4 new species recorded for the National Park. [Report by Deb Andrew, event leader].

OATLEY LIONS FESTIVAL 20TH OCTOBER

This popular event attracts over 12,000 local residents each year and raises \$30,000 for community projects. Thanks to all members who helped at our stall or dropped by for a chat. The stall helps raise OFF's profile in the community and to share information and appreciation of native plants and animals. Alan Fairley raised \$60 from sale of native plants and we gained a new member. A number signed the document in support of a change of name to **the Oatley Bushland Park**.

THE OFF ANNUAL DINNER

This year it was on Friday 9th Nov., forty people complied with the entry requirement wearing a fancy hat. Trevor Revis entertained us singing three lovely unaccompanied songs with an Australian flavour. The raffle raised \$200 that has been donated to the Environmental Defenders Office.

MYLES DUNPHY STREAMWATCH

This is a regular testing program by volunteers of the creek lines flowing through to the Georges River. The Group next gathers at 9am on Tuesday 27th Nov. For more detail ring Sharyn (9579 1262) or Heather (0425 291 879).

FOR NOTING

Speakers: Our Program Officer is looking for interesting speakers on subjects related to flora and fauna for some of our meetings next year. If you have any suggestions please contact Matt on 9570 8271.

Walks: Our Field Officer is looking for people to lead interesting walks. Please contact Alison on 9580 5557

Membership You can opt to renew your membership for 2013 by direct bank transfer - [more detail in the renewal notice]. OFF is also inviting and encouraging donations. These to go into the "President's Fund" and it is from this fund that OFF donates to dynamic environmental groups. New members are most welcome. If on the internet, click here for [more about OFF](#).

Council development controls based on scientific data could be tossed out if the NSW Government adopts proposals in the Planning Green Paper, in effect handing planning controls to developers. www.colongwilderness.org.au

Hassan's Wall Orchids feature in a colour booklet of that name, with illustrations and notes on 60 native orchids and flowering times. www.lithgowmercury.com.au/. OFF is planning a guided walk to see the orchids next November

Total Environment Centre (TEC) invitation to their 40th birthday bash/fund raiser at Lion Gates Lodge in the Botanic Gardens on 22nd Nov, 6-8 pm. Tickets \$45. RSVP required. Go to www.tec.org.au/tecs-40th-anniversary

The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map \$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage. Buy the map online (www.bluemountains.org.au/), write to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782 with your cheque or money order,

SNOWY MOUNTAINS 2012

Our annual trip to Smiggins Chalet is from Sat Jan 12th to Sat 19th January. [Costs per night are \$110 double or twin share, \$50 extra adult, \$90 single, and \$42 per child 6-18]. For information and booking, phone Robin Dickson on 9580 5663.



Look what happens when we cut down too many trees.