



# O.F.F. NEWS



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## BIODIVERSITY CORRIDORS

Kirstin Proft, Biodiversity Conservation Officer, National Parks Association of NSW, spoke at our February meeting on Wildlife Corridors and their importance in maintaining connectivity between bushland to help ensure the survival of native species. She also discussed how corridors and 'connectivity conservation' are changing the way that we think about protecting nature. Kirstin's presentation was illustrated with telling examples of NPA projects, such as the Travelling Stock Routes of NSW and the Great Eastern Ranges initiative. [www.npansw.org.au](http://www.npansw.org.au) [www.greateasterranges.org.au](http://www.greateasterranges.org.au)

## MYRTLE RUST

There are reports of Myrtle Rust in the Sutherland and St George areas. This serious fungal disease could wipe out many of our most loved plants and close down walking tracks



Myrtle Rust on *Agonis flexuosa* (Willow Myrtle) 'Afterdark'

in national parks. It is a new invader, originally from South America, first confirmed in Australia in April and in Sydney in August 2010. It is a serious threat to Australia's ecosystem. The infestation is quite distinctive, producing masses of powdery bright yellow spores that quickly spread to leaves and stems and the entire plant will die if badly affected. The spread of Myrtle Rust is difficult to prevent as its spores are wind-blown, and it can be spread by moving plants or cuttings and by human contact. Some fungal sprays may help, and plants could have the infected parts cut off, bagged in plastic and put in the rubbish bin. Badly infected plants must be removed, and some bushland sites quarantined. Local Councils need to keep records of diseased sites, conduct surveillance to establish the extent of the disease, raise awareness of the problem within the community and inform residents on ways to reduce its spread. Myrtle Rust is a notifiable to Dept of Primary Industries. [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/)

## THE COLONG FOUNDATION CHALLENGE 2012

It is your last chance to support the Colong Foundation's membership drive before we draw the raffle at our 23<sup>rd</sup> April OFF meeting. The prize is a framed print by Henry Gold. Tickets are available to all new 2012 Colong Foundation members. The membership is \$30 and goes to supporting the valuable work the Colong Foundation does in the Blue Mountains area, including campaigning successfully for the Gardens of Stone National Park. Contact Jason Cockayne on 9570 8559 or at [jay.shaz@hotmail.com](mailto:jay.shaz@hotmail.com) to enter the draw if you have already made payment for membership. Membership is available from Jason or through the Colong website [www.colongwilderness.org.au](http://www.colongwilderness.org.au).

## THIRLMERE LAKES

The Lakes within Thirlmere Lakes National Park are part of a unique wetland some 15 million years old. The lakes' water levels have been declining for no obvious reason, and on 25<sup>th</sup> October, the NSW Government announced an independent inquiry. The Inquiry Committee includes experts in the fields of hydrology, geology, geomorphology, climatology, paleogeography, freshwater ecology and mining. The public can register to receive information on the inquiry, or make submissions. Contact the Thirlmere Lakes Inquiry, PO Box 99, Picton, 2571, or go to [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/water/](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/water/)

## HAND STENCILS IN OATLEY PARK

A number of Aboriginal hand stencils have been found in Oatley Park. They are in the back of a small sandstone overhang near the water line with access from Lime Kiln Bay. Deep shell middens in front of the cave show long usage of the site.



The stencils have been produced by blowing liquid white clay over the flattened hand, a common technique. Might this be yet another strong argument in favour of the long sought after heritage listing of Oatley Park?

## OSPREY PHOTO IN OATLEY PARK

The bird photographed is an Osprey, listed as vulnerable under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. It was banded on the Clarence River in 2003. This is a second banded Osprey. The other is regularly seen roosting on Gertrude Point Lugarno (left leg yellow over red, right leg green). It was banded on the Clarence River in 2005, appearing here in 2008. Both birds are females with their pronounced brown collar. I have not seen the new bird roosting anywhere near Gertrude Point, although I did see a second Osprey over Jewfish Bay about 2 weeks ago. There is also a pair of Osprey we see regularly on the Botany Bay wader count at Towra Point. [Photo by Peter Hayler Choosy Pix Photography. Report by OFF member and National Parks Officer Debbie Andrew - More at [off.oatleypark.com/](http://off.oatleypark.com/)]



**Earth Hour:** 8:30pm Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March is a World Wide Fund [WWF] symbolic initiative focusing on reducing our impact on the planet. [www.wwf.org.au/earthhour/](http://www.wwf.org.au/earthhour/)

## OFF MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2012

Pay at meetings by cash/cheque, or by mail by cheque or you can use bank transfer to [062206901997] but you must put your name on the transfer document!

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

**Mar 26<sup>th</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with **Graham Fry** speaking on **Madagascar**. **Graham** describes it as a land of contrasts. It neighbours Africa, but was settled by South-east Asians. Lush eastern rainforests abut rugged central ranges and the arid west coast has cactus-like spiny forests and baobabs. The unique wildlife includes wide-eyed lemurs, cryptic chameleons and brilliant frogs. The population is more than 20 million and the people are remarkably self-sufficient. Liz and Graham travelled to Madagascar in late 2011 with a group of Australian Museum Members.

**April 1<sup>st</sup> (Sun) Field Day: Cumberland State Forest**, the only state forest in the Sydney area. Meet at 9.30 am at the gate on Castle Hill Road, West Pennant Hills (directions available if required). Allow about an hour to drive. Entry is free. We can explore the walking tracks, information centre and the nursery and the café for morning/afternoon tea and a picnic area for lunch. The itinerary can be tailored to suit the group. Distance about 2-3 Km, an easy day. Bring hat, lunch, water, walking shoes, etc. Leader: **Graham Lalchere**, T 0430 968 260.

**April 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting** with local photographer, **Chris Rehburg** of *Wildlife Monitoring* speaking on **The Use Of Camera Traps in Fauna Monitoring**. He will have lots of photos and video footage as well. He photographed the wallabies in Oatley Park. His website is: <http://www.wlmd.com.au/>

**April 27<sup>th</sup> (Fri) Field Event: Lizard and gecko spotlighting** at Lime Kiln Bay **Leader: Matthew Mo** [details later].  
**May 6<sup>th</sup> (Sun) Field day: Loves Bay Kiama - Gerringong.** **Leaders: Lesley and Peter Cox.**

## FAREWELL TO WIN TONKIN

Win has announced that she is leaving Oatley. Her involvement with OFF began way back in 1961; Win and her husband Norm were among the earliest members of the Society. Since then she has been an active participant at meetings and field trips. She served on the Committee for 5 years, being Publicity Officer (1971, 1972, 1975), and Vice President (1974). Win will be sadly missed by her many friends in OFF, but she has promised to attend as many activities as possible during the year.

## OATLEY PARK – by Win Tonkin

There's a little piece of forest  
Mid the city's traffic roar.  
It's been there a long, long time  
A thousand years or more.  
Some trees are old and gnarled  
And some are straight and tall.  
There is shade between the eucalypts  
And spots of green where sunbeams fall.  
It is in the springtime when wildflowers abound  
Enticing birds and bees to spread the pollen round,  
The carols of the magpies herald the coming dawn  
Kookaburras and cockatoos salute the sun newborn.  
There's space for children playing  
In the old Steam-roller park.  
And fishermen can throw a line  
From the jetty before the dark.  
This is a priceless piece of land  
Let's save it from man's greedy hand,  
So that the flowers and birds and trees  
Will last for all eternity.

## CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 2012

This year OFF cleaned up a new site, Lower Gannons Park, Peakhurst. Due most likely to the recent inclement weather, leaving the ground very wet, only 18 OFF members and friends took part, working away from 8.30am to noon, and collecting some 12 bags of rubbish. The collection included 2 tyres, a 6m length of galvanised steel pipe and some timber. Approximately half the rubbish was recyclable.

Many were surprised at the extent and nature of the area, for which Hurstville City Council is developing a master plan. A large part of the park is devoted to an off-leash dog area and it appears that the regulars, the main users of the area, look after it quite well, with a relatively small amount of rubbish, most found in out-of-the-way spots.

As usual the Oatley Lions Club ran an after clean up BBQ at Oatley Park. The BBQ operator also ran the clean-up on site! Again there was not a great roll-up to the BBQ, as the participation in Oatley Park was also less than usual. Let's hope for better weather next year and more participants for Clean Up Australia Day 2013. [Report by Leader, Graham Lalchere]

TARONGA ZOO & SNAKE HOUSE, Field Day Mar 10<sup>th</sup>

Magnificent weather helped make the day spectacular. All eleven of us found our behind the scenes reptile tour and talk most fascinating. We learned about keepers' regimes, breeding programmes and how safety regulations and precautions have evolved and improved over the years. The antivenene procedure was explained and our understanding of snakes' physiology and habits were expanded. We were all surprised at how much we didn't know about snakes! Several of us experienced a snake scarf around our necks.

Other highlights included the Seal Show, Free Flight Bird Show and enjoyment of the Elephants at Play with their Keepers. An added bonus was a baby elephant's 2nd Birthday celebration with a "fruit" cake with 2 carrot candles. Party food included several bucket sized red ice blocks which were smashed by the elephants to reveal apples frozen inside. For those of us who had not visited the zoo in a long time we were very impressed with the improved environment for both the animals that live there and those visiting. [Report by Leader, Robin Dickson]

## Briefly

**Community Forum** The annual Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority [SMCMA] event will be held on Sat 31<sup>st</sup>. All environmental volunteers in the region are welcome. Register at [nicoladixon.wufoo.eu/forms/](http://nicoladixon.wufoo.eu/forms/)

**Oatley Park and Surrounds Photos** and other interesting items on our website. [off.oatleypark.com/](http://off.oatleypark.com/)

**Pictorial Memories of St George** has just been published. It is a 125 page book of historic photos and research information including a chapter on OFF. If there is enough interest, we may get a few copies at discount for sale at meetings.

