

O.F.F. NEWS

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 4TH FEBRUARY

Congratulations to Graham Lalchere elected President, to our elected committee members, and congratulations and thanks to Julian Sheen for his splendid leadership in his six years as President.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Julian Sheen in his presidential address reviewed the strengths of O.F.F. and the challenges it is, and will be facing. He questioned:

1. What keeps OFF strong?
 - Sustaining our values based on *conservation*: the abiding belief that we should live in harmony with nature.
 - Credibility and integrity: We are not ratbags who jump on the latest Green bandwagon. We are critical and careful – and committed.
 - Confidence that Oatley is not just another burb. Oatley offers joys that are not found everywhere, that require protection.
 - Membership: Our membership, sustained at about 300, is based on our members seeing us as relevant to their lives and lifestyles.
2. What challenges does OFF face?
 - The national and global challenges and pressures of living out of harmony with nature.
 - Locally: The “Big House” syndrome or McMansion ethic that says you must build the biggest house and cram it full of stuff.
 - Urban consolidation: While this leads to smaller housing, which is a good thing, trees and habitat are lost as blocks are completely cleared.
 - Local Council attitudes: While attitudes have changed since the old, “kerbing and guttering” days of the 70s, Councils are often out of harmony with nature. This requires vigilance.
 - Retaining our relevance. Many a Bowling Club and Progress Association, having been sure of their relevance, now find themselves disbanded. We should never assume we would not suffer the same fate. Our changing demographic may challenge our relevance; we must be adaptable while holding strong to our core values.

I pass on the president's position to safe hands, confident in the sustained relevance of Oatley Flora and Fauna, and I look forward to our centenary, 42 years away. [Julian Sheen]

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Alan Fairley's service to OFF has been recognised by a National Volunteer Award.

Membership averaged 295, including 15 new members. Former members who died during the year included June and Keith Underwood (who both served terms as Secretary), Sylvia Keech, Grahame Pepper, Joan Nicholson, Muriel Harding, Betty Blacker and Jim Griffiths. Twelve field outings had an average of 12 participants. Most popular were whale watching in Royal NP with Alan Fairley and a night walk to see geckos in Lime Kiln Bay, led by Matthew Mo.

Our monthly meetings attracted an average audience of 47. Thanks to Rodger Robertson and Cliff Crane of for their last minute stand in for the scheduled speaker in August. The biggest attendances were for talks on Biodiversity Corridors, Aboriginal Art, and Sustainable Urban Home Designs

Julian Sheen gave interviews regularly on radio 2NBC FM to publicise meetings.

Forty people attended the Annual Dinner organised by Alison Gilroy and Sue Howard. Guests wore eye-catching hats and Trevor Revis entertained with well-chosen songs. \$200 raised by the raffle was donated to the Environmental Defender's Office. The Annual Picnic in Oatley Park was held in fine weather, and attracted a loyal crowd.

We ran stalls at Oatley Lions Festival, Oatley Scouts Market Day and, for the first time, Cross Currents River Festival at Georges Hall. Environmental book prizes were again presented to a student each at Oatley and Oatley West Public Schools.

Other activities included a week at Smiggin Holes in January, attended by 16. In September members joined Harry Whaite's family to scatter his and Olive's ashes on the peak in the Blue Mountains named after Harry.

Eleven entertaining issues of the newsletter were produced by John Davoren. 40 percent of members receive a posted copy, the remainder accessed it online at OFF's website. Melina Amerasinghe enhanced the website with brief illustrated news bytes linked to longer articles; highlighting specific items and encouraging feedback.

We lobbied Hurstville Council to better care for local wetlands and worked towards improving the health of Georges River. Graham Lalchere supervised our Clean Up Australia Day site in Gannon's Park and we sought political support for a national deposit-refund on beverage containers. We lodged objections to removal of significant native trees proposed in building applications and attended a meeting of Hurstville Council's Tree Management Working Party. Kogarah Council's solicitor briefed us on the EPA Act on tree preservation and we resolved when it is necessary to protect trees, to seek on expert advice.

We made submissions on Heathcote Ridge Development, Gannons Park Landscape Masterplan, NSW Planning and Infrastructure's New Planning System, NSW Review of Hazard Reduction Program, HCC Local Environment Plan, Coalpac Consolidation Project, and the Dharawal NP Plan of Management. We wrote letters on the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill and Shooting in National Parks, and we are campaigning to re-name Oatley Park as Oatley Bushland Park, a suggestion from Lesley Cox. At the Oatley Lions Festival, we collected signatures in support, and we will present our case to the new Hurstville Council.

Alan Fairley initiated the production of a colour brochure on the birds of Oatley Park, and funds are being sought.

OFF has a new logo incorporating a magpie and a flannel flower, designed by Tim James. It appeared on the first issue of OFF News for 2013.

We co-operated with groups including NPA Southern Sydney, Oatley Heritage & Historical Society, Menai Wildflower Group and Friends of Royal NP and disbursed \$1,700 from The President's Fund to eight conservation organisations.

My thanks to committee members for their support and advice, and to all members of O.F.F. for their commitment to the conservation of our natural environment. [Elizabeth Cameron]

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2013

Have you paid your membership fee yet? The fee is \$25 per family. One way to pay is by direct bank transfer to BSB 062 206 Account no 901997, AND put your name on the transfer form.

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

Feb 25th (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Dr Dieter Hochuli, Associate Professor at Sydney University School of Biological Sciences, talking on *Urban Ecology in a Changing World*.

Mar 2nd (Sat) Field Day touring Michael Mobb's Sustainable House 58 Myrtle St Chippendale. Fee \$5 pp. Catch the 8.43am train from Oatley to Redfern. The tour is from 9.30 to 10.30 am, after which Michael will give us information on the surrounding road gardens with over 1,000 fruit trees, herbs, and edible plants in 12 blocks. We will then do a self-guided tour of these streets, so bring hat, sunscreen and water. We should be finished between 12 and 1 pm, and then go off for coffee.

Leader: Graham Lalchere T 0430 968 260 or 9580 3107.

Mar 25th (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Dr Peter Mitchell, who is one of Australia's leading environmental scientists, talking on *Traces of the Ice Age in Sydney*.

April 6th (Sat) Field Day to the Upper Georges River Bushland Corridor - Platypus and Koala Country. Destinations are an old convict road (called the Old Ford Rd) that traversed from Campbelltown to the Coast, and the Basin, a river and creek junction on the upper Georges River. **Leader: Sharyn Cullis.**

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY - MARCH 3RD

Help us clean up on *Clean Up Australia Day*. The OFF site will be in Poulton Park, meeting on the corner of Morsehead Drive, South Hurstville. Kogarah Council will provide a BBQ for volunteers from 1pm.

Come along anytime between 8-30am and 1pm. Bring gloves, sunglasses, sunscreen, and please wear sturdy shoes. www.cleanupaustriaday.org.au/

SEWAGE IN THE GEORGES RIVER

Sydney Water crews were in Oatley after recent heavy rainfall caused two sewage overflows in Myles Dunphy Reserve and Lime Kiln Bay.

Brian Shaw, chairman of the Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance, noted that it was at least the fifth overflow in the area in 12 months. Increasing urban densities and new suburbs have generated massive increases in the sewage load dumped into this area. It appears that problems arise because of the age and condition of the sewerage system. Sydney Water spent \$65m on lining the North Georges River sub main, but the rest of the system needs urgent work, particularly to reduce ingress and illegal connections of stormwater. Significant innovative solutions are needed to cope with the overloaded system, and to prevent discharges into the Georges River tributaries, including those around Oatley.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAWS

Under pressure from big business and the mining industry, federal and state governments have recently announced an aggressive plan to wind back essential environmental protection laws. This plan would remove essential federal protection for threatened species and accelerate mining and coal seam gas development in forests, and rural areas.

The federal government must not abandon its environmental responsibilities and the NSW government must restore balance, integrity, and legitimacy into the NSW planning process. We need an improved regime for assessing major public infrastructure, with early engagement and input from local communities, to improve the decision-making process and community acceptance of proposals. nccnsw.org.au/campaigns/

MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE

OFF has submitted comments to Hurstville Council on the draft Plan of Management for the Reserve and Wetland. The chief concern is on the effect that any developments at the site of the former Oatley Bowling Club would have on the integrity of the Myles Dunphy Reserve. In O.F.F.'s view the Reserve is compromised by the exclusion of the site from the Plan. Recorded history makes it clear that the site is indeed part of the Reserve, yet its exclusion is based on an assumption that it is not part, and/or that it is not relevant in maintaining the health of the Reserve.

This assumption is called into question with the comment on page 140 of the Plan that "any redevelopment of the bowling site must not be to the detriment of the rest of the Reserve". However, because of its exclusion, the Plan has no role in ensuring that any site developments will not harm the Reserve, when, in view of the proposals mooted, detriment is virtually unavoidable. The 204 page draft plan is available on Council's website. www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/

O.F.F.'S PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR IS POSTED THIS MONTH TO ALL MEMBERS, AND THIS NEWSLETTER IS POSTED WITH IT. THE USUAL REMINDER E-MAIL MESSAGE TO MEMBERS TO LOOK FOR IT ON THE INTERNET WILL NOT BE SENT. THE LATEST EDITION WILL BE ON THE WEBSITE FROM THE THIRD MONDAY OF EACH MONTH.

WILDERNESS SOCIETY: JAMES PRICE POINT

The Wilderness Society (WS) will join with Goolarabooloo Traditional Custodian, Richard Hunter, in taking the West Australian Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the Environment Minister to Court over the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas hub at James Price Point, in the Kimberley region. The Department of State Development and EPA support the project, covering an area 20 times the size of the Melbourne CBD. In July last year, the EPA released its Report recommending approval with some conditions. However, the Report was suddenly finalised and approved by the EPA Chair acting alone. The highly controversial 'one-man decision' ignored apparent conflicts of interest, and triggered public outcry with some 1800 public submissions lodged in less than a week. WS is of the view that this case will make a significant contribution to the community campaign against environmental devastation, and that, if successful, the WA Government will have to re-examine its environmental assessment process dramatically. WS seeks our financial help. See much more at www.wilderness.org.au/

BIRD BROCHURE APPEAL FOR \$2500

If you would like to help this worthy cause, please indicate that your donation is for the bird brochure.

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 26th Feb. For more detail ring Sharyn (9579 1262) or Heather (0425 291 879).

FOR NOTING

Human Dependence On Nature - How To Help Solve The Environmental Crisis, a book by Haydn Washington Published by Routledge RRP \$40.95

March Blooms in Oatley Park are listed and illustrated on our website off.oatleypark.com/

Menai Wildflower Group Meeting 13th March - Guest speaker Greg Jackson- "Delardes Reserve, Illawong". Menai community markets 17th Mar. menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au

Oatley Heritage & Historical Society has quarterly meetings to report on current research. They are held on the last Friday of Feb, May, Aug, and Nov at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL. www.oatleyheritagegroup.com

