



THE FIRST NATIONAL PARK

In its February newsletter the National Parks Association [NPA] noted that, although denied by many, the world's first gazetted national park was Australian, in Sutherland Shire, before Yellowstone USA. In 1972 the Yellowstone Library and Museum Association produced a commemorative book entitled *Yellowstone: A Centenary of the Wilderness Idea*. This notes that "the first time the [title] national park was used in the body of a public act was in the establishment of the National Park* near Sydney, Australia in 1879. The first legislative reference to Yellowstone as a national park occurred in 1883". <http://branches.npansw.org.au/> (*Renamed The Royal National Park in 1954 after the Queen's visit.)

LESS CONCERN ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

A NSW environmental survey in 2012 indicated less community concern about the environment than there had been in earlier surveys. Health, education and transport rated as higher priorities, while environment and environmental issues were nominated by only 6% as a current priority, down from 11% in 2009. While 14% rated environment as a priority for attention in 10 years' time, this compares to an earlier 23%. The changes in attitude are apparently related to the decline in prominence of water issues, and far less mention of climate change. The research indicated that the ongoing confusing debate over environmental issues makes it too hard for many to engage in bigger-picture issues, resulting in greater focus on matters closer to home, and less on protecting the environment. www.environment.nsw.gov.au/

EARTH HOUR 2013

Earth Hour is a simple idea that has quickly turned into a global phenomenon. On Sat March 23rd, hundreds of millions turned off their lights for one hour across the globe to show their commitment to creating a more sustainable planet. At 8:30pm, they turned off lights, televisions, computers, and other devices. Although scheduled to run only for one hour, many took it upon themselves to continue long into the night. <http://theenergycollective.com/> <http://files.earthhour.org.au/2013/>

In Toronto Canada, that country's largest electricity company recorded a 205 megawatt reduction during the event, a 7% drop from regular load at that time, equivalent to taking 92,000 homes off the grid. In British Columbia, residents saved 1.95% of their electric load, and in our Hunter Valley, Ausgrid, the electricity distributor, reported a 1.5% energy reduction. In Sydney the figures were not readily available, but the Opera House did turn green for the occasion.



Sceptics do not appreciate the global symbolic nature of the event, and sneer at the level of electricity saved, as if that were the primary objective. Some people walking round our local area were disappointed to see so many houses not taking part, with all their lights, and even outside lights on, perhaps as sign of a negative reaction!

O.F.F 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 062 206 901997 Oatley Flora and Fauna Con Soc, but if you do so, you must put your name on the transfer form.

MORE BUSHFIRES

Ken Thompson, formerly deputy commissioner of the NSW Fire Brigade commented in the SMH [5th April] on the huge bushfires now occurring every summer in south-eastern Australia. "Wet winters - and we look set to have one again this year - create an explosion in tree growth that the arid summer dries out. This leaves a ready and enormous supply of fuel for the flames to feed off, and increases the odds for bushfires to occur. No one wants to see another Black Saturday, but all the evidence suggests that without action, that is exactly what will happen. The work of our climate scientists and the Climate Commission is valuable, but fire-fighters need detailed, regularly updated information. Long-term bushfire weather forecasts every two years would help us prepare for the inevitable consequences. We need to make sure that climate change gets no worse, and we are better prepared to cope with potentially devastating fires".

AROUND THE WARRAGAMBA DAM

The Colong Foundation notes that were the dam wall to be raised by the proposed 23m there would be significant negative results. Upstream, the World Heritage Wilderness and National Parks would all be damaged, and downstream so would the protected Kowmung, Cox's and Nattai Rivers. Flood inundation would scar wilderness areas, killing river bank vegetation and depositing sediment.

The false sense of security created by raising the dam wall would encourage the further release of low lying land where development is currently prohibited. Up to 100,000 houses could be constructed with the detrimental effects of:-

- X Dramatic increase in vehicle movements per day in the Hawkesbury-Nepean valley, leading to congestion, air pollution and health problems throughout western Sydney;
- X Huge increase in run-off and sewage discharge with further deterioration of water quality;
- X Loss of rich agricultural land to urban expansion and destruction of fisheries, and the oyster farming industry. <https://www.colongwilderness.org.au/dont-raise-dam>

COAL SEAM GAS [CSG]: CONTINUING DEBATE

Four Corners looked at the CSG issue on April 1st. It noted that the industry is promoting itself as a cleaner carbon-fuel alternative, but that much of the information to back this claim comes from the industry itself, and does not always square with experience on the ground. A reporter talked to farmers who have seen rivers bubble with methane, their bore water polluted with chemicals, and reserves of ground water on their property dropping alarmingly. www.abc.net.au/4corners/ Australia is in the middle of a huge gas boom with around \$180 billion being spent on infrastructure, but long term damage to the environment is still not being properly addressed. The recent Community Forum at Springwood highlighted many matters of concern, and called for greater community participation to help achieve reasonable restrictions on CSG development. <http://www.stopcsghm.net.au/> As EDO notes, if CSG activities continue without restriction, the potential for conflicts over land use, and negative environmental, social and economic impacts is greatly increased. www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site

THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE

EDO NSW still needs our support to continue to provide legal advice to the community, to seek improvements to environmental laws, and to provide community legal education in publications and workshops. <http://edo.org.au/edonsw/>

COMING EVENTS

April 22nd (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Neil Saintilan speaking on **Coastal Mangrove, Saltmarsh and Climate Change**. Dr Saintilan is Principal Research Scientist and Head of the Rivers and Wetlands Unit in the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

April 27th (Sat) Field Day to Oatley - Como Bridge Walk. Meet at 10am at the south end of Myra Place, at the beginning of the walkway. It is a walk specially designed for those "who no longer do bush walks". The tour should take about an hour with free discussion to follow. Bring water and food; coffee shops are available. **Leader: Graham Austin** T 9579 2375. www.railtrails.org.au

April 28th (Sun) Field Day to Mt Annan Native Botanic Gardens. Drive is up to 45 minutes from Oatley, down the M5 to the 2nd Campbelltown exit, to route 9 (Mt Annan Gardens signposted in a big brown sign). Take the right fork towards Campbelltown/Narellan along Narellan Rd. Turn left at the 2nd set of traffic lights into the gardens. Meet at entrance to the car park near the visitors centre at 10.30 am. We will be doing a 3 km circuit walk of about 1 hour, (Central Valley Walk) leaving near the visitors centre. Then we will tour by car, stopping at various gardens highlighting specific families of plants, and stop at one of these for lunch. Bring lunch, water, hat, and sunscreen. **Leader: Alison Gilroy** T 9580 5557. www.rbgsvd.nsw.gov.au

May 27th (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Graham Fry speaking on **Reducing Energy Use in the Home - Save Money and the Environment**.

June 1st (Sat) Field day amble from Lugarno to Peakhurst. Amble Leaders: Jan Douglas & David Crawford- T 9533 2187.

June 24th (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Gary Schoer speaking on **Shackleton's Subantarctic Voyage**.

TRACES OF THE ICE AGE

At our March meeting, Dr Peter Mitchell, one of Australia's leading environmental scientists, gave an illustrated talk on how Botany Bay has changed over the last 30,000 years, with an emphasis on human occupation since the last ice age. He spoke on indications of sea level change, and its likely effect on the earliest occupants of Sydney's coast - the Aborigines. He discussed the studies of the earliest work on Aboriginal sites in the 19th century, through to the present archaeological work on remnants of the apparently once extensive middens. His information was delivered clearly, with excellent slides supporting his conclusions, some of which - through his own admission - still considered controversial amongst his peers. Arguments that Aboriginal fishing practice may have been influenced by early Polynesian visitors; and that the sea reached 2m above present levels not so very long ago, were among the ideas giving us food for thought.

Note also Peter's role in [finding Bennelong](#) [SMH 27/03/2011]

FIELD TRIP: UPPER GEORGES RIVER

It was a beautiful rain washed morning on Sat 6th April when nine of us gathered in the bush behind Campbelltown. Threatening clouds cleared and fortunately the rain stayed away. Walking along the tracks there were many flowers out, including lambertia, several types of banksia, epacris, and early wattle. Initially we ambled down an historic road, built in the 1880's, that is now listed on the NSW State Heritage Inventory. There was evidence of old dynamite works from initial construction, and lovely old sandstone flagging in culverts and dish drains. In one magnificent grey gum, a koala was spotted enjoying the morning sun. The Koala colony in the upper Georges River bushland is a particular research interest of the University of Western Sydney, and thought to be one of the healthiest and largest so close to Sydney. After we had morning tea on the banks of the upper reaches of the Georges River, we walked up the slope, and then back down a steeper trail with 230 stairs to another part of the Georges River gorge further upstream. This was a magnificent water hole, called The Basin, with cascades over a wonderful rock platform. Several people swam there, and we had lunch basking on the rocks. We weren't lucky enough to spot any elusive platypii. Their presence was confirmed in this vicinity in 2011 when one was found drowned, entangled in thick fishing lines. On a more positive note, there have been live sightings since then. [third-platypus-sighting-this-month-at-kentlrv](#) [Report by Walk Leader Sharyn Cullis]

MAY BLOOMS IN OATLEY PARK

Sweet-scented Wattle (*Acacia suaveolens*) is early flowering, commencing in April and lasting until November. It is widespread and common. For the whole list of May blooms go to <http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=2032>.



MORE EFFECTIVE RECYCLING

The Total Environment Centre [TEC] welcomed *Waste Less, Recycle More*, the NSW Government's recently announced five-year \$465.7 million waste and resource recovery initiative. "There's no doubt the refocussing of the large waste levy revenues on new infrastructure to collect organics and remove hazardous products from contaminating kerbside recycling will help towards more effective recycling", said Jeff Angel, Executive Director TEC. He goes on to make the case, as does [Greenpeace](#), that a 10 cent refund is needed to get cans and bottles returned to drop-off points. "We'll need fully effective and viable drop-offs and collection programs to get this stuff out of kerbside."

www.environment.nsw.gov.au <http://www.tec.org.au/> <https://www.greenpeace.org.au/action/?cid=38>

BIRD BROCHURE

Production of the colour brochure of *Birds of Oatley Park and Lime Kiln Bay* is progressing; the style has been decided and the text completed. off.oatleypark.com/fauna.html

Hurstville City Council has agreed to make a substantial contribution to the brochure. Thank you Council, and all others who have donated.

FOR NOTING

Kimberley Updates from the Wilderness Society - awe-inspiring videos made about the Kimberley, its pristine nature and why it should be protected. <https://secure.wilderness.org.au/>

Myles Dunphy Streamwatch: Volunteers testing the creek lines flowing to the Georges River meet 9am on Tues 23rd April. Detail: Sharyn (9579 1262), Heather (0425 291 879).

National Trust Community Milestones 18th April to 31st May: celebrating heritage across the State to entertain, inspire and inform us all. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/>

Oatley Heritage & Historical Society's next meeting will be on 24th May, beginning at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL, with Graham Lalchere speaking on the history of the Oatley Bowling Club. www.oatleyheritagegroup.com

World Environment Day June 5th is one of the principal means by which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment, calling for political attention and action. www.timeanddate.com/holidays/un/world-environment-day

