



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.



The park is not completely natural. It has roads, an oval, picnic areas and historic tidal swimming baths. It is subject to intensive recreational uses, especially at weekends and in summer holidays when hundreds of visitors picnic, cycle and walk throughout the park. Nevertheless, there remain some significant natural areas protecting a wide range of native plants many of which are locally endangered or are regionally extinct.

The park's natural values cannot be taken for granted. The flora is under threat from excessive hazard-reduction burning, from too many recreational visitors, and from park maintenance by inexperienced workers.

The future of the park depends on community concern, awareness that this is a valuable asset, and management by the Trustees with expertise and foresight. [See more at <http://off.oatleypark.com/flora.html>]

OATLEY BIRD SIGHTINGS - APRIL 2013

8pm. A pair of Powerful Owls call from a gully in Moore Reserve after being absent since last year's breeding season. Hopefully the pair will breed again this year.

A pair of King Parrots is already examining a hole in a tree at Moore Reserve, months before the normal breeding season. The female bird spent half an hour at the hollow with the male perched at the entrance keeping up a continuous array of sounds as if encouraging its mate.

A Caspian Tern in winter plumage was seen fishing off Websters Lookout, Oatley Park.

A pair of Musk Lorikeets investigated a tree hollow in Oatley Memorial Park. If this pair was to nest, it would be a first record of breeding in Oatley. Although often seen in Oatley and throughout Sydney, these parrots rarely breed in the suburbs.

Migrating Yellow-faced Honeyeaters have been passing through Oatley all autumn. Flocks of up to 50 birds were noted at Hills Peak in Oatley Park with hundreds of birds flying towards Lugarno. These flocks include an occasional White-naped Honeyeater, a bird once common in much of Sydney but hardly seen nowadays in built-up areas. [Report by David Waterhouse]



BLOOMS IN OATLEY PARK IN JUNE

Black-eyed Susan (*Tetratheca neglecta*) is small shrub with whorled leaves; flowers pink with four petals and a dark centre, found on the plateau near the lookout but uncommon. More on the website at: off.oatleypark.com/?p=1131



BIRD BROCHURE

The coloured brochure *Birds of Oatley Park* is now at the printer. We thank Hurstville City Council for their contribution towards printing costs. Barring unforeseen holdups, we intend to give a copy to each person attending the next OFF meeting on May 27th.

KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK AT RISK

The Colong Foundation notes the view of some scientists that the Park is at risk because of increased use, climate change, introduced plants and animals, and it's being developed and sold. A real estate bonanza is planned that will see the park damaged and apartments sold for a quick profit.

Global warming increases impacts. Kosciuszko's snowline has been rising for over 50 years. The ski resorts want increased artificial snow, continued experimental cloud seeding without environmental assessment; and more summer commercial recreation that would turn Kosciuszko into a private amusement park. High impact users are demanding more access to fragile park areas. Four wheel drive, trail bike and horse riding groups are pushing for more fragile parkland to be put aside for their use. Without effective management and adequate funding, pigs, goats and wild horses will trample sensitive landscapes, pollute streams, displace native animals and spread weeds through the park. www.colongwilderness.org.au/campaigns/

MORE FREEWAYS?



Governments are seeking to build more freeways. Sydney's [WestConnex](http://www.westconnex.com.au) project is a good example. The plan is to extend the M4 and M5 costing somewhere between \$10 and \$12b.

The case seems impressive, yet there is telling evidence worldwide that, in the longer term, freeways increase overall road use and congestion. To reduce congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and related problems, it is argued that the better environmental and economic option is to improve road and transport efficiency, not just build more roads. new-freeways-cure-congestion-time-to-put-the-myth-to-bed-13896

BIRDLIFE POWERFUL OWL SURVEY

It is on again in the Sydney Basin. There are a number of pairs resident along the estuarine Georges River and, if you are interested in the survey, please contact David Bain, Powerful Owl Project Officer, at the Birdlife Australia Discovery Centre T96471875, david.bain@birdlife.org.au. If you have evidence of Powerful Owls in the St. George area please contact Chris Lloyd at Pezoporus@bigpond. Any sightings/hearings with a date and location are useful but even better if you note what the bird was up to.

MINING ACTIVITY

The Wilderness Society notes that mineral exploration in Australia increased by 34% in just 12 months between July 2011 and June 2012 and that the total expenditure on oil and gas exploration rose by almost 50% between 2007 and 2011. The projects included nine new mines across the Cape York Peninsula, oil and gas mining off the Arnhem Land coastline, open-cut tin mining in Tasmania's Tarkine region, oil drilling in the Great Australian Bight and coal interest in the Great Artesian Basin. www.wilderness.org.au/

COMING EVENTS

May 27th (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Graham Fry speaking on Reducing Energy Use in the Home. In recent years the cost of electricity and gas has increased substantially, causing financial hardship to some people in our community. This talk by a former energy adviser will be on how we can save energy in the home which in turn will save money and reduce our impact on the environment. Topics discussed will include lighting, heating, hot water and solar power.

June 1st (Sat) Field Day Walk in Peakhurst and Lugarno in four reserves (Jinna Reserve, Gannons Park, Heinrich Reserve and Evatt Park) and local streets. Meet at 9.15am in Jinna Reserve at the intersection of Pamela Ave and Jinna Rd, Peakhurst for an 8.5 km walk looking at local plants, weeds and history on a mixture of rough and smooth tracks and footpaths/ nature strips. About 5.5km is in reserves. Wear sturdy shoes, bring a hat, morning tea, lunch and water as we won't pass any shops or cafes. We expect to be back at our starting point by 3.30pm, depending on the time spent on lunch and discussion of plants and history. **Leaders: Jan Douglas and David Crawford** T 9533 2187 or 0431 712 191.

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

June 29th (Sat) Field day to Curracurrong Royal National Park, Whale watching. Leader: Alan Fairley- 9570 8332

July 22nd (Mon) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Sharyn Cullis and Phil Andersen speaking on Travels through Three National Parks in Patagonia

July 27th (Sat) Field day to Thirlmere Lakes. Leader: Graham Fry - 9580 6621

COASTAL MANGROVE AND SALTMARSH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Dr Neil Saintilan spoke on this topic at the April 22nd meeting. Neil is Principal Research Scientist and Head of the Rivers and Wetlands Unit in the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, and his research interests focus on the ecology of freshwater and saline wetlands, and their response to climate change. Neil's passion for this subject began as a young boy playing in the mud in Gungah Bay, Oatley.

He noted that coastal saltmarsh has been listed as an endangered ecological community in NSW, when recent research points to its importance as a source of nutrition for fish, a feeding habitat for microbats, and a roosting habitat for several species of migratory shorebirds.

It is reputed that saltmarsh is 10 times more efficient at sequestering atmospheric carbon than rainforest, an important reason alone to convince governments around the world to commit to preserving and extending saltmarsh areas.

Since European colonisation, coastal saltmarsh has been reclaimed for agricultural, residential and industrial use. Over the past five decades there has been a consistent replacement of saltmarsh by mangroves. Reasons for this change might be shading of saltmarsh by successive mangrove expansion. Mangroves are favoured over saltmarsh by the many ways in which we have changed the environment of estuaries, with higher sediment and nutrient loads, sea-level rise and higher temperatures (mangroves are tropical plants and saltmarshes mainly temperate).

Research highlights the importance of allowing for the landward retreat of saltmarsh as sea-levels rise. With a future featuring global warming and sea level rise, saltmarsh may just increase its domain if tidal barriers are kept out of the equation.

COMO BRIDGE WALK: 27th APRIL

A group of twenty met at the commemorative plaque and, led by Graham Austin, enjoyed the bridge walk and reflections on the history of the track opened on 15th Dec 1985. The three in the photo were on the committee that battled over six years for the walkway over the old bridge, unused since 1973, and over which trains first travelled on 16th Dec 1885. off.oatleypark.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/oatley-como-walkway



DIGITAL COPY OF O.F.F. NEWS

There are advantages in reading the newsletter on the internet. It is usually available on the Tuesday before our monthly meeting, with an e-mail reminder if you want it. You can read it in colour format, download it, print it or send it on. You then save postage costs for the Society, and have instant access to the precise places in the websites mentioned. You can remove your name from the mailing list by contacting Robin on 9580 5663 or Liz at lizc@pacific.net.au

FIELD TRIP TO MT ANNAN: APRIL 28th

Mt Annan, established in 1988, is the largest botanic garden in Australia. Situated on former farmland, it contains remnant Cumberland Plain Woodland, a critically endangered ecological community of the region. It showcases Australian flora amongst its rolling hills and lakes, and with abundant native animal and birdlife, picnic areas, barbecues, lakeside lawns, walking and cycling tracks it is a popular recreational destination. www.rbgnsyd.nsw.gov.au/

The field day was magnificent, clear, and more reminiscent of summer than autumn. Eighteen people, including two children, met at the visitors centre. We first did the inner area walking circuit, taking in district views, and inspecting arboretums of fig trees, Wollemi pine groves, and various sculptures including the human sundial. Some even made the small excursion to Summit Mt Annan. Lunch was partaken on the lush lawns, by the lake filled with waterlilies and ducks. We then piled into cars, and drove to three of the feature gardens, viz the *Big Idea Garden*, the *Wattle Garden* and the *Banksia Garden*. [Report by the leader, Alison Gilroy]

FOR NOTING

A Guide to Private Conservation in NSW available free to the community from EDO. [email EDO](mailto:EDO) or T 9262 6989.

K imberley 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/>

M yles Dunphy Streamwatch: testing the creek lines flowing to the Georges River meets 9am on Tues 28th May. Detail: Sharyn (9579 1262), Heather (0425 291 879).

O atley Heritage & Historical Society's next meeting will be on Friday 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

W orld Environment Day 2013 Concert June 5th 7pm Independent Theatre North Sydney, an evening of music celebrating the beauty of nature, and mourning senseless destruction. theindependent.org.au/ticket_store/so_performance/100612394 www.timeanddate.com/holidays/au/world-environment-day

FORGOTTEN YOUR OFF MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2013?



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