



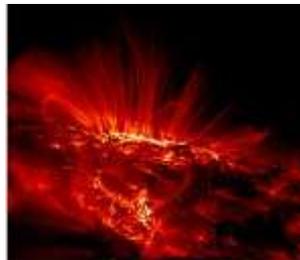
### WATTLE DAY – 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER

The Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) unofficially accepted as our Floral Emblem from federation, was proclaimed as Australia's floral emblem in 1988. The event was marked by the ceremonial planting of a Golden Wattle by Hazel Hawke at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. In 1992 the Commonwealth and States agreed to hold Wattle Day on September 1<sup>st</sup>. It had previously been held on August 1<sup>st</sup> in NSW flowering, as it does, earlier in the warmer weather. The Golden Wattle is an evergreen, spreading shrub or small tree, and grows in the under storey of open forest and woodland. When in flower, it displays the national colours of green and gold. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acacia\\_pycnantha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acacia_pycnantha)



### A COOLER SUN

*The New Scientist* notes that the recent lapse in solar activity is not the beginning of a long absence of sunspots that might cool the climate. Rather, it represents a shorter, less pronounced downturn occurring every century or so. Sunspots – dark patches that appear on the sun's surface due to intense magnetic fields – are the seat of solar activity and can affect Earth's climate in a number of ways, although the size of the effect is debated. Sunspots virtually disappeared between 1645 and 1715, a period now known as the *Maunder minimum*. Northern Europe experienced the worst winters of exceptionally cold weather in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Some now suggest that this similar lapse in solar activity could offset global warming. However, sunspot numbers vary in a natural cycle lasting some 11 years. The current cycle is meant to be at its peak now, but sunspots have been scarce since 2008, and we may be about to enter another *Maunder minimum*. [www.newscientist.com/article/](http://www.newscientist.com/article/)



A sunspot viewed close-up in ultraviolet light, taken by the TRACE spacecraft

### PROTECT THE PLACES AND WILDLIFE WE LOVE

The Humane Society International [HSI] notes that big business is pressuring federal government to hand over environmental approval powers to the States. Premiers are attacking our national parks and weakening state planning laws, and cannot be trusted to protect the places and wildlife we love. We need to let them know that we are watching, and will stand up for laws protecting precious places and wildlife. [www.hsi.org.au/](http://www.hsi.org.au/)

### BIODIVERSITY BEGINS WITH a B

"Daily reports document the tiniest rise and fall of the stock market or the price of currency. Yet the services of nature such as filtration of water, absorption of carbon dioxide and release of oxygen, protection against erosion and many others that keep the planet habitable for predators like us are virtually ignored. Pollination keeps the terrestrial ecosystems going, and without pollination those systems would collapse. A world without bees would be a world without people" – David Suzuki <http://www.operationbee.com/biodiversity.php>

### PROTECTING THE TASMANIAN DEVIL

The Federal Government has approved two mines for the Tarkine region of Tasmania, on condition that the mines fund conservation measures for Tasmanian Devils and other threatened species. The approvals follow the Federal Court overturning approval of the Shree Minerals mine on the grounds that former Environment Minister Tony Burke failed to consider conservation advice on Tasmanian Devils. The deaths of a few devils, orchids, spotted-tail quolls or wedge-tailed eagles are unlikely to have significant impacts on their populations. But what are missing from the assessments are the cumulative effects of the many mines proposed for the region. There are currently ten mines proposed in the next five years, and over 50 exploration licenses held over the region. So, how are Tasmania and the Commonwealth to account for potential cumulative impacts? [theconversation.com/tasmanias-tarkine](http://theconversation.com/tasmanias-tarkine)

### CUTTING FORESTS FOR THE FURNACE

The Nature Conservation Council notes that the NSW government is set to overturn a ban on burning native forest wood for electricity, a practice last seen in the nineteenth century. Removing the ban would give a green light for the construction of electricity plants powered almost exclusively by native forests. This is not just about feeding forest floor litter into the furnaces. Any tree that is not good enough for the saw mills could be cut and burned for energy. Lifting the ban will put our forests and native wildlife at unacceptable risk. <http://ncnsw.org.au/>

### COAL SEAM GAS

NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane was directed by Premier O'Farrell to review CSG-related activities. In her initial report she noted that coal seam gas drilling is a complex issue and divisive because of the emotive nature of community concerns, the competing interests of the players, and lack of available factual information. It poses health and environmental challenges that should be met by an overhaul of workplace training, greater transparency and more research. Professor O'Kane asked for a series of changes to create a "world class" regulatory environment. "People have a right to know the science and a right to know the impacts of the industry; transparency in regulation and governance is essential." [www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/)

### MORE ON FRACKING

The Wilderness Society is gravely concerned about plans for dams and large scale coal mining and gas fracking in the catchment of the Fitzroy River, the mightiest free-flowing river in the Kimberley. [www.wilderness.org.au/campaigns/](http://www.wilderness.org.au/campaigns/)

### BUSHCARE'S MAJOR DAY OUT

On Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> September, Hurstville Bushcare Volunteer Network and OFF are combining skills and expertise to take part in the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Bushcare's Major Day Out. Our local event will start at 9:00am at the Steamroller Picnic Grounds, Oatley Park. As well as stalls promoting community participation in Bushcare and nature conservation, there will be guided bird watching walks, a plant propagation workshop, and a spring flower walk. Full details of the program can be found on the OFF website. Locations for other *Major Day Out* Events in Sydney can be found at the organisations' website <http://www.bushcaresmajordayout.org/>

## COMING EVENTS

**Aug 26<sup>th</sup> (Mon): 7.45pm regular monthly meeting** with Alan Fairley speaking about his April 2013 trip to Galapagos Islands, unique wildlife, plants and geology.

**Aug 31<sup>st</sup> (Sat): Field day to Muogamarra Nature Reserve** between Cowan, and the Hawkesbury River. Meet at 9am at the visitors shed within the reserve to sign on and introduce ourselves. The reserve is open till 4.30pm and there is an entrance fee of \$10 per person or \$25 per family. From Sydney, head north towards Newcastle on the F3 and take the Berowra exit. Turn right onto the Pacific H'way and follow past Cowan. Park entrance is on the left approx 3km north of Cowan. Bring sturdy shoes, hat and sunscreen, morning tea and lunch. Recommend members carpool, and if anyone needs help in finding a lift please let us know. If running late, just call and we can wait for you. **Leaders: J Cockayne & S Pearson ☎ 9570 8559 ☎ 0411744715**

**Sept 8<sup>th</sup> (Sun): Bushcare's Major Day Out** <http://www.trailtalk.com.au/profiles/>

**Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon): 7.45pm regular monthly meeting** with Dave Kirshner, "Goanna Man", speaking on **Monitor Lizards**.

**Sept 28<sup>th</sup> (Sat): Field day to La Perouse** - Catch the 8.45 am train from Mortdale to Martin Place and walk to the Elizabeth St bus stop to catch the 194 bus at 9.34. We will get off at the Jennifer St boardwalk at Little Bay and follow the track around Cape Banks and Henry Head to Bare Island at La Perouse. The walk is about 8-10ks along a well-made track with good views and various points of historic interest. At the end of the walk you can have a cup of coffee or an ice-cream at the shops or have a look at the La Perouse Museum, before catching the bus back to the city. **Leader: Jennifer Whaite ☎ 9580 7343**

**Oct 28<sup>th</sup> (Mon): 7.45pm regular monthly meeting** with Christine Guthrie speaking on **Hidden Treasures: Places & Plants in Sutherland Shire**.

**Nov 2-3<sup>rd</sup> (Weekend): Field Trip to Hassans Walls Orchid Sanctuary**, Lithgow. **Leader: John Watters ☎ 9534 1096**

**Nov 15<sup>th</sup> (Fri): OFF Annual Dinner** [Details later]

**Nov 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon): 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and Social Supper** with Ann Young speaking on **Upland Swamps of the Woronora Plateau - Ecology & Mining Threats**.

**Dec 1<sup>st</sup> (Sun): Field day Royal National Park** early morning bird watching- **Leader: Deb Andrew ☎ 9570 2695**

**Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> (Mon): Christmas Picnic / BBQ** [details later]

## THREE NATIONAL PARKS IN PATAGONIA

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> July meeting Sharyn Cullis and Phil Andersen

gave a talk and picture show on the landscapes and wildlife of Patagonia. They showed some of its huge rivers, soaring peaks, beech forests, icy glaciers and some fascinating animals.

The three national parks featured

were Los Glaciares, Tierra del Fuego and Torres del Paine. The Los Glaciares NP features Mt Fitzroy and the Perito Moreno Glacier. The Tierra del Fuego NP borders on Ushuaia, the port city closest to Antarctica, and the Beagle Channel. The Torres del Paine NP has mind boggling craggy peaks, and is home to an astonishing array of wildlife including pumas, condors, guanacos, rheas and much more.

[See some here > <http://www.google.com.au/search?q=condors,guanacos,rheas>]

Sharyn mentioned some of the issues arising from the influx of tourists to these National Parks; with illegal camp fires frequently going out of control, whipped up by the fierce winds in the region, and the problems of managing tracks for tourist access through vast, wild and very cold areas.

AROUND THIRLMERE LAKES: SAT 27<sup>TH</sup> JULY

Eighteen OFF members and friends took part in the walk on a perfect winter's day with clear sunny weather. The lakes had plenty of water but the reeds around the edges gave waterbirds good cover and made spotting them tricky. It was a leisurely walk with plenty of time for appreciating nature, in particular the spring flowers which were starting to bloom and we saw at least three species of ground orchids. The bush and the lake provided plenty of material for our photographers. We had lunch at a lovely clearing and were entertained by the birds as they flitted about. With the continuing controversy surrounding coal mining under the park and its possible effect on the lakes' water, we did notice a cave with a recent rock fall that may have been caused by the mining. [Report by Leaders, Graham Fry and Liz Cameron].

There are a lot of people in this world who spend so much time watching their health that they haven't the time to enjoy it. [Josh Billings]

## FOR NOTING

**Art and Craft Show** Oatley Uniting Church, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Sept, 9 am to 7 pm.

**For Art's Sake 2013 a FRANS INC.** fund raiser [for its services for disabled people] - an exhibition of photographs and prints - at Sydney College of the Arts, Rozelle. Photographers are invited to submit an entry by 13<sup>th</sup> Sept [☎ 9799 4333]. Opens 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. [www.forartssake.org.au/](http://www.forartssake.org.au/)

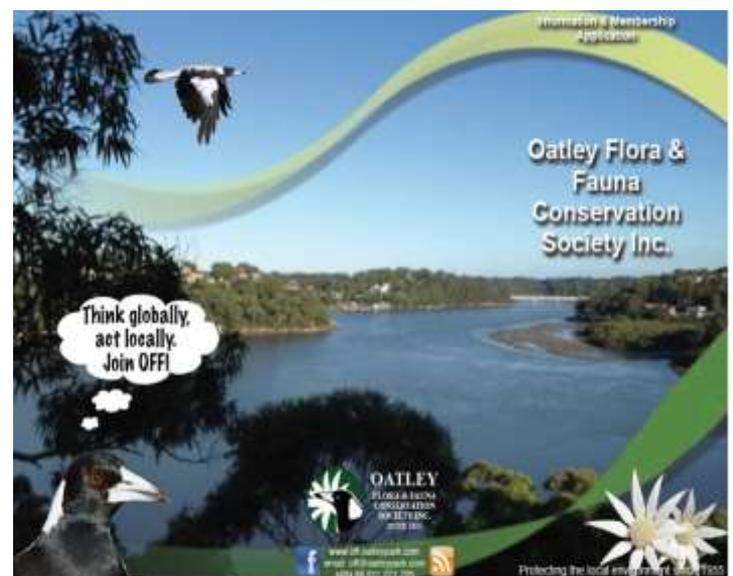
**Hut News** August edition with interesting articles including one on sustainability. "We all want human society to be sustainable, to reduce [our] net impact on our environment to zero, so that we and the natural environment can co-exist forever on Earth". [www.bluemountains.org.au/](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/)

**Myles Dunphy Streamwatch**, next meets at 9am on Tues 27<sup>th</sup> Aug. Details: Sharyn (☎9579 1262), Heather (☎ 0425 291 879).

**National Biodiversity Month** is held in September each year and aims to promote the importance of protecting, conserving and improving biodiversity both within Australia and across the world. [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/)

**Wolli Creek Preservation Society**. See their interesting newsletter including scenery, history and the WestConnex threat to the area. <http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wp-content/>

[http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli\\_valley/issues](http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli_valley/issues) : [http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli\\_valley/exhibition](http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli_valley/exhibition) :



## NEW OFF BROCHURE

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This edition of O.F.F. News is on our website where the underlined links will take you directly to references.