



### SYDNEY DRINKING WATER

There are [five major drinking water catchments](#) managed specially to provide clean drinking water to over 4 million people in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra. Large parts of the catchments have been gazetted as [Special Areas](#) designed to exclude public access and protect the quality and quantity of water to the city. Unauthorised access to Special Areas can lead to fines of up to \$44,000. These rules, however, do not prevent mining in these sensitive sites and there are 8 underground coal mines currently operating within the Sydney drinking water catchments. Over the last 20 years, long wall mining in the catchments has led to major land subsidence. This in turn has caused cracking and draining of rivers, creek beds and undergrounds aquifers, cliff falls, draining of swamps, fish kills, methane gas bubbling to the surface of creeks and rivers, and iron oxide pollution, and the discharge of polluted mine water into local creek systems. Despite these known impacts, confirmed by an [official inquiry](#), mining is still occurring immediately adjoining creeks and rivers in the catchment causing methane vents and creek fracturing.

[http://www.lockthegate.org.au/our\\_water](http://www.lockthegate.org.au/our_water)

### ENVIRONMENT VERSUS ECONOMY

The chequered story of the native forest industry and the ever-growing subsidies from governments is noted in *The Australian Native Forest Sector: Causes of the decline and prospects for the future* prepared earlier this year by Andrew Macintosh, of the ANU. His Report notes that while the industry has been adversely affected by conservation measures, the global financial crisis and the high dollar, these are secondary to its underlying problem of declining demand for its products. This has bankrupted the native hardwood industry's largest producer, Gunns Ltd, and State forest authorities have recorded a loss of some \$150m in the last four years.

The common perception that protecting the environment is in conflict with the economy provides the industry with a persuasive case for continued government handouts. If the community wants to restrict the logging of native forests in Tasmania, it assumes it should compensate the industry and workers for loss of livelihood. The federal government has been doing this for years. In 1989 the Tasmanian forestry sector received \$42 m, in 1997 \$110 m, in 2005 \$203 m, and in 2013 \$300 m.

Taxpayers are supporting a collapsing industry and allowing it to continue doing avoidable damage to native forests. "If conservationists had more sense they would join the economic rationalists in urging governments to stop giving subsidies to an industry trying to defy market realities". Ross Gittins SMH 31/08/2013 ■ [www.smh.com.au/business/](http://www.smh.com.au/business/)

### RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

*Beyond Zero Emissions Inc.* [BZE] is a not-for-profit research and education organisation seeking the implementation of a zero emissions economy for Australia. Its goal is to move from a fossil fuel based, emissions intensive economy to a renewable-energy-powered one in line with the latest science. The University of Melbourne's Energy Institute and BZE have published the *Stationary Energy Plan*, a fully costed proposal for achieving zero emissions in ten years with commercially available technology. Much more on renewable technology at <http://bze.org.au/> & [theconversation.com/renewable-energy-](http://theconversation.com/renewable-energy-) & [www.aussierenewables.com/](http://www.aussierenewables.com/)

### HASSANS WALLS RESERVE

This principal destination for our November field trip is located 3.5km south of Lithgow CBD. It is an area of 770 hectares with spectacular cliffs, lookouts, and pagoda rock formations. The exact date of the naming of Hassans Walls is unclear, but it was probably in 1815 when Governor Macquarie was on his way to Bathurst. The site reminded him of a place of that name in northern India where he had military service in 1803.



Hassans Walls Lookout is the highest lookout in the Blue Mountains, approximately 1,100 metres above sea level, with a view to Mount Wilson, Mount York, Mount Tarana and Mount Blaxland and the whole Hartley Valley. Classified a Crown Land Reserve in 1978 with Lithgow City Council as trustees, it is home to over 60 varieties of native orchids and other beautiful wildflowers. The plants of the Reserve include towering Eucalypts of many varieties, and understory plants - Banksia, Wattle, Waratah, Daviesia, Phyllota, Prickly Moses, Smooth Geebung, Drumstick Tea Tree, Native Grasses, Curly Wig and Tree Ferns. Blackthorn can be found on the lower slopes providing a habitat for the Purple Copper Butterfly. Orchids abound with some 60 different species observed.

Among threatened animals in the Reserve are the Purple Copper Butterfly, (only found in the Bathurst, Oberon and Lithgow areas), the Powerful Owl, Spotted Tail Quoll and the Gang Gang Cockatoo. There are Rock Wallabies, Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Possums, Eastern Rosellas, Sulphur Crested Cockatoos, and Currawongs.

Pagoda rocks can be found in the Reserve, made up of sedimentary shale and sandstone, mainly Permian and Triassic. The terrain ranges from open heath-land to forest, and ferns can be found in some of the gullies. Evidence of Aboriginal activity in the Hassans Walls Reserve exists in the form of middens and rock art. In accordance with the wishes of the traditional custodians of the Lithgow area, the Wiradjuri, locations are not publicised but may be stumbled upon when exploring the Reserve. Tourist information is available at the Visitors Centre Great Western Highway Lithgow ☎ 1300760276 ■

<http://www.lithgow-tourism.com/>

### COAL SEAM GAS EXPANSION

Mining companies are carrying out test drilling around the country and current legislation does not give landowners the right to veto this drilling. Landowners are protesting but seemingly without much success. For details around the northern rivers go to <http://csqfreenorthernrivers.org/csq-free-communities/>

### LIONS FESTIVAL - OATLEY - 19<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER

Each year, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October the streets and parks of Oatley are transformed into a sea of stalls, entertainment, rides, and music. OFF runs a stall each year, and is looking for volunteers for the day, or any part thereof. Please contact Liz ☎9580 6621 or Alan ☎9570 8332 closer to the time. For more information [www.oatleylions.org.au/](http://www.oatleylions.org.au/)



## COMING EVENTS

**Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting.** Note that **Dave Kirshner**, who was to speak on monitor lizards, is unable to attend, and instead **John Davoren** will be speaking on **Environmental Dilemmas**.

**Sept 28<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day to La Perouse.** The walk is about 8-10ks along a well-made track with good views and various points of historic interest. 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. 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.** This weekend event will begin with a guided walk in the Reserve noting the native orchids and other rare plants, and go onto the Secret Sanctuary for a tour and an evening meal at the Restaurant. Participants should arrange their accommodation for Sat night. Sunday has a number of possibilities that can be discussed on arrival. See details of HW above. **Leader: John Watters/ ☎ 9534 1096**

**Nov 15<sup>th</sup> (Fri): The OFF Annual Dinner scheduled for this date has been deferred.** [See the note below\*].

**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 in Oatley Park [details later]**

**Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) AGM followed by members' photos & supper & Feb 24<sup>th</sup> 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and Social Supper**

### EXPLORING THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS TALK

About 45 people attended our August 24<sup>th</sup> meeting to hear Alan Fairley's presentation on Galapagos Islands that he and Chiew visited in April. The emphasis was on the great diversity of wildlife to be seen, the endemic flora and the importance of the islands to Charles Darwin and the early formation of his theory of



evolution through natural selection. The talk was enhanced by photos of the beautiful and varied scenery and the close-ups of animals, many of which are found only on specific islands. It was an enjoyable and informative evening.

### MUOGAMARRA NATURE RESERVE WALK 31<sup>ST</sup> AUG

Muogamarra Nature Reserve was awash with native flowers of bright pinks and sunny yellows. It was here that a group of 30 members of OFF, Menai Wildflower Group and Hurstville Council Bushcare enjoyed the splendour of the last day of winter. We were a little too early for flowering of most of the waratahs, but we did manage to see some of these iconic specimens, and the boronias, eriostemons and pultenaeas were in full flower.

The reserve offers various walks of different grades, aspects and views and has a deep history of colonial existence. The NPWS staff and volunteers were very knowledgeable and extremely helpful about the program of walks available – either as a guided walk or as an amble at your own pace.

This is the second year we have been to this reserve and we always experience or see something different. As the reserve is only open 6 weekends a year check out NPWS website for next year's opening times. [Report by Leaders Jason & Sharon]

[Click here to see movie of Spring in Muogamarra Nature Reserve on our Face book site](#)

### WE HAVE A FACEBOOK PAGE

OFF is committed to finding new ways to protect the environment. We now have a Facebook page for you to make comments, upload photos or chat about environmental issues. Please visit the page and "like" to keep in touch with updates.

<https://www.facebook.com/OatleyFloraandFauna?ref=hl>

- Report faulty streetlights to AUSGRID
- Please ensure you have the following details ready:
  - Street location; • Pole number;
  - How many always on, or always off, or going on and off.

### \*OFF ANNUAL DINNER – deferred to mid-2014

The OFF committee decided not to hold the OFF dinner in November this year because of rising costs, falling attendances, and the hectic end-of-year activities for most of us. However, we are planning for an OFF Dinner mid-year celebration in 2014, and would welcome your suggestions for a venue and theme.

Do join us for the next two OFF social events - the 25<sup>th</sup> Nov meeting and Social Supper, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec annual picnic in Oatley Park.

The Annual Super Raffle will now be held at the 25<sup>th</sup> Nov meeting. Everyone has been generous with raffle donations in the past, and we need your help again; proceeds from the raffle are donated to conservation organisations, and last year \$200 was raised. Please search your cupboards for attractive but unwanted gifts and items purchased but never used, and anything else suitable. Donated items will be gratefully received at the next three meetings; or you can bring them to me at 41 Lloyd Street. Many thanks for your support. Sue Howard ☎ 9579 1718

### FOR NOTING

**M**yles Dunphy Streamwatch, next meets at 9am on Tues 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Details: Sharyn (☎9579 1262), Heather (☎ 0425 291 879).

**M**embership renewal for 2014 can be by direct bank transfer [more detail when the renewal notice is sent out]. New members are welcome. Click here for [details](#).

**M**ulga Road Books 89 Mulga Rd Oatley W is operated by Rotary Hurstville and has a wide range of quality second hand books. ☐ <http://rotarcap.com/mrb/>

**S**peakers: Our Program Officer is looking for interesting speakers on subjects related to flora and fauna for our meetings next year. Please contact Matt ☎ 9570 8271.

**W**alks: Our Field Officer is looking for people to lead interesting walks. Please contact Alison ☎ 9580 5557

**W**orld Habitat Day is on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October to reflect on the state of human settlements and people's right to sufficient shelter. It aims to remind people of their responsibility for habitat for the future. ☐ [www.national-awareness-days.com/](http://www.national-awareness-days.com/)

