



PLANNING FOR PEOPLE

The *Community Charter for Good Planning in NSW* lists principles for a better fairer planning system and more accountability. It is a response to widespread community disillusionment with recent planning decisions and developments. It was prepared by a working group of community organisations, and endorsed by over 60 community groups, [including OFF], and by individuals and some Parliamentarians.

The Charter is designed to put the need for good planning on the agenda of voters and candidates. We encourage OFF members to consider endorsing the Charter after reading it and associated information at <http://thecommunitycharter.org>

CONSERVATION OUR RESPONSIBILITY

OFF News in its 1970 May edition noted that *“in the 200th year since Cook’s arrival there is a growing awareness of past mistakes. The conservation bandwagon, well supported by worldwide concern over pollution, ill advised planning, and wildlife destruction, is running more smoothly. Since major issues are now receiving attention, it seems that small societies such as ours can serve best by taking an active interest in local problems - land usage, pollution of our waterways, parks, and reserves.”*

The 1970s local problems included the battle for the bays along the Oatley section of the Georges River. The natural beauty and environmental values of these waterways and wooded foreshores were severely threatened by the shortsightedness of Hurstville and Kogarah Councils. [See *battle for the bays* in [Being Green](#) by Alan Fairley.]

In view of today’s problems, it is interesting to note that in 1970 *The Leader* reported that the Water Board decided sewage overflow should be diverted into Oatley Bay.

THREATENED SPECIES & PLANNING LAWS

The [Environmental Defender’s Office](#) notes that the report commissioned by the [Places You Love Alliance](#), finds that many state and territory laws do not meet the requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. This is of concern with the move towards ‘one-stop-shop’ assessment, and approval of developments likely to affect the environment.

The Federal Government’s handover of environmental approval powers to the States will wind back 30 years of legal environmental protection, and put at risk Australia’s World Heritage Areas such as the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu and the Tasmanian forests.

<http://www.edonsw.org.au/federalhandover>

COAL SEAM GAS - GOOD OR BAD

Deciding whether coal seam gas is good or bad is wholly dependent on the individual’s definition of the words “good” and “bad”. The industry wants to make us believe that coal seam gas is good for Australia, but their claim is the subject of heated debate.

NSW Chief Scientist Mary O’Kane says the technical challenges and risks posed by the coal seam gas industry could be addressed by limiting extraction to areas where geology and land use was appropriate.

The role of scientists, and organisations such as the CSIRO, is to act as honest brokers and to bring some clarity to the debate. Coal seam gas can be used as a source of energy and Australia has vast reserves, but its [unmitigated](#) development can have [environmental](#) and [socio-economic impacts](#) on communities. CSIRO’s aim is to inform the community, governments, and industry about the risks and opportunities that stem from developing our gas resources. It is a complex and divisive issue. theconversation.com/ & smh.coal-unintended-consequences

COAL MINE AT CULLEN BULLEN

The [Colong Foundation](#) notes that the [Department of Planning & Environment](#) recently recommended approval of a Coalpac modified open-cut coalmine at Cullen Bullen. It had rejected a larger proposal by the company in 2013. The Gardens of Stone Alliance, opposed to this mine, were surprised and dismayed by the recommendation that it now go to the [Planning Assessment Commission](#) for final determination.

Tara Cameron, spokesperson for the BMCS, states, “Coalpac is now insolvent. It has demonstrated a very poor record of corporate due diligence. “If the government is endorsing Coalpac’s current proposal, it is basically saying that mines should be approved irrespective of any corporate record and at any social or environmental cost.” www.colongwilderness.org.au/

INCREASING RENEWABLE ENERGY USE

As international agreements fail to address increasing greenhouse gas emissions, the way is opening for renewable energy to be perceived differently.

An article published in the science journal [Nature](#) notes that China, the world’s largest power producer and source of carbon emissions through burning coal, is expanding its renewable-energy systems faster than its fossil-fuel and nuclear power. China is now leading the world in the production and use of wind turbines, solar-photovoltaic cells, and smart-grid technologies. It is generating almost as much water, wind and solar energy as all of France and Germany’s power plants combined. By boosting markets in water, wind and solar power, it is driving down costs and accelerating the uptake of renewable energy. It is consequently contributing more than any other country to addressing greenhouse gas issues. It may also contribute to reducing our coal exports.

AUSSIE BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 20-26TH OCT

Join the inaugural *Aussie Backyard Bird Count* organised by Birdlife Australia where you are invited to go to your local patch, to count the birds, preferably for about 20 minutes, and to record the information. The app is now available for download on iphones and android devices. Just search for ‘Aussie Bird Count’. You can also enter data on the website:



<http://www.aussiebirdcount.org.au>

NOMINATIONS FOR COMMUNITY AWARDS

OFF nominated two people for awards this year, one for Hurstville City Council Volunteer Recognition and one for the St George Community Award.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Oct 27th (Mon) 7.45pm monthly meeting with Jim Vickery speaking on Rainwater Harvesting in Oatley
- Nov 2nd (Sun) Field day: Illawarra Fly & Illawarra region. Meet in [Robertson](#) at the Pie Shop for morning tea at 9.30 am. Estimated travel time 1½ hours. If travelling on Hume Hwy, turn off at Mittagong to Bowral, if on Princes Hwy turn off at Albion Park to join the [Illawarra Hwy](#) [A48]. We will visit nearby [Illawarra Fly](#) around 2pm. Maps and directions will be provided closer to the date. Need to have firm numbers by 28th Oct to get the discount rate of \$18 Adults & Seniors (normal \$25/\$21) Child \$8. Leader: **Melina Amerasinghe**
- Nov 24th (Mon) 7.45pm monthly meeting and social supper with Shauna Chadlowe speaking on Australian Wildlife Conservancy.
- Nov 29th (Sat) Field day on Five Ferries. Leader Jennifer Whaite ☎9580 7343
- Dec 1st Christmas Picnic / BBQ [Details later]
- Feb 2nd (Mon) AGM followed by members' photos and a social supper
- Feb 23rd (Mon) 7.45pm regular monthly meeting and social supper.

GEORGES RIVER AND POWERFUL OWLS

The 22nd September meeting was exceptional with Chris Lloyd, Powerful Owl (POWL) study co-ordinator for the Georges River, giving an educational and thoroughly entertaining presentation on the changing ecology of Georges River and its relation to POWLS.

Chris provided so much interesting detail dating back 10,000 years when the climate and ecology around the Sydney Basin was completely different to present day conditions. Aborigines hunted the ringtail possum, the favoured prey of POWLS, thus reducing available food for their sustained population.

When Europeans arrived, the tall forests of turpentine and blackbutt around the Georges were felled by a thriving timber trade over a century or more. This resulted in loss of habitat and, more importantly, very few suitable nesting holes. POWLS are particularly choosy about the dimensions of nesting holes and only certain large trees are suitable.

Urbanisation again changed the environment, and remnant bushland tended to occupy gullies where housing was not suitable. Lack of bushfires changed the floristics leading to an increase in such trees as pittosporum and privet – a favoured habitat for ringtail possums. The advent of bush regeneration and the popular movement of planting of native plants provided a ready supply of nectar for ringtails and they thrived.

The extensive bush fires of 1994 that burnt out the Royal National Park correlated with the first sightings of POWLS on the Georges River. The POWLS found the ringtails delicious and plentiful and have since settled in to delight local nature lovers. [Report by Matt Allison]

CAPERTEE NP WEEKEND – OCT 10 - 12TH

Fourteen headed to Capertee NP for the weekend. The Valley looked stunning as usual and the Park was picturesque with its Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Wallaroos feeding on the river flats, many with pouch young. Common Wombats and young were seen just below the homestead. The River was flowing and birdsong filled the air with many summer migrants - the Rufous Whistler, Rainbow Beeater, Rufous Songlark, and Cicadabirds about. The Double-barred Finch, Superb Blue Wren, King Parrots, Pied Butcherbird and White-winged Choughs were seen about the homestead and the cheery Willie Wagtails sang enthusiastically, day and night, to the discomfort of some guests.

Graham Fry provided us with some close encounters of the feathered kind, seeing Willie Wagtail, Pied Butcherbird, and White-plumed Honeyeater in the hand. Two nights trapping with harp traps for microbats produced over fifty individuals of five species, including the Eastern Free-tail Bat (*Mormopterus ridei*), a new species recorded for the Capertee NP. [A full list of fauna observed will soon be on the [OFF](#) and [NPWS Wildlife Atlas](#) websites].

We had a beautiful walk along the Ulumbra Creek with its crystal pools and elfin glades among the River Oak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) with some terrific views of two large Red-bellied Black Snakes, Eastern Long-necked Turtle (formerly Tortoise) and the Superb Lyrebird. Sharyn Cullis did some invertebrate sampling in the creek, educating us on freshwater aquatic invertebrate life and noted that the invertebrates present indicated high water quality. At a sunset, viewing from the Valley Lookout in the north of the Park, we watched the crimson light fall on the cliffs of Genowlan Point and Black Mountain in adjacent Muggie Murum-ban State Conservation Area, and Graham Lalchere had a close encounter with a grazing wombat. We were all impressed with the quality of the accommodation and gave NPWS full marks for the renovations to the homestead and cottage. We look forward to our next visit. [Report by Leader Debbie Andrew]

OATLEY PARK FLOWERS IN OCTOBER

The list includes this Flaky-barked Tea-tree (*Leptospermum trinervium*) a medium to spreading shrub with flaky bark. Leaves are narrow elliptic and pointed, but three veins not always prominent. Flowers white, five petalled, often with a red ring.



[See the whole October selection on the website.](#)

FOR NOTING

Australasian Bird Fair at the Armory in Sydney Olympic Park on 25-26th October. It will be the first large-scale bird and wildlife event of its kind in Australasia. www.birdfair.com.au

Community CSG forum on Sun Nov 23rd, 11am in Mortdale RSL organised by [Stop CSG Network](#).

Georges River Project: The Australian Government's *Your Community Heritage Program* supported the Georges River project to include additional material about the Georges River in the Dictionary of Sydney in 2014 dictionaryofsydney.org/contributor/your_community_heritage_grant

Migrant Information Day, St George 10am - 1pm Wed 29th Oct at Rockdale Town Hall. [community event](#)

Myles Dunphy Streamwatch, next meets at 9am on Tues 28th Oct. Details: Sharyn ☎9579 1262, Heather ☎0425 291 879.

Oatley 2015 Calendar designed by OFF, features many local natural attractions. [See below and www.facebook.com/OatleyFloraandFauna]

World Park Congress 12-19th Nov at Sydney Olympic Park, - the theme "Parks, people, planet: inspiring solutions", with original approaches for conservation and sustainable development.

