



OFF News

Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc.

Protecting the local environment since 1955

<http://off.oatleypark.com>

Issue 4/2014

April/May

FRIENDLY FLYING FOXES

At the 24th March meeting Sandra Guy, a wildlife rescue volunteer, spoke on flying foxes, and their key role in ensuring the ongoing health of ecosystems where animals are every bit as important as plants. Sandra showed that most types of native forests across the continent depend on flying foxes to do the heavy lifting, pollinating hundreds of species of trees and ensuring genetic diversity and survival of many different types of forest communities. They are a 'keystone species', with an essential ecological role without which the ecosystem will collapse.



Many native trees have blossoms that are only receptive to pollination at night, and the only significant nocturnal pollinators are flying foxes. Without them, we will lose the structure that provides the essential microcosms supporting thousands of other flora and fauna species; yet few realise their key role. However, flying foxes are in decline and the main species on the eastern seaboard, the Grey Headed Flying Fox, may be extinct within 20-30 years. It is time to examine Bats' roles to see what can be done to save them. They seem so foreign to us, inhabiting the night skies; a realm so diametrically opposed to ours; myths and misunderstandings dominate our attitudes, and misinformation about their disease risk can cause great concern. Only recently have studies led to some understanding of their important role.

They have existed for over 55 million years and are one of the most successful and abundant mammals. There are two main types: the microbats (Microchiroptera) and the megabats (Megachiroptera).

They are remarkably intelligent with highly sophisticated social structures. They are more intelligent than dogs and, in captivity, easily learn their own names and the routine of the house or aviary. They breed very slowly as mothers can only raise one pup a year. They form tight emotional bonds, teaching the pups grooming and social skills, until they become independent at about five months. If too long in human care, they become too dependent, and cannot be released into the wild.

They can travel up to 100kms a night foraging for food; returning each morning to an established campsite to rest, nap and socialise during the day. These campsites cause conflict with people, as they can be both odorous and noisy. Unfortunately, bats' preferred residence is similar to ours, a sheltered gully near fresh water with tall trees and rich soil, protected from disturbing winds. As people clear bat habitat for their homes and farms, flying foxes are quickly losing both food sources and campsites.

The problem of conflict with existing campsites is difficult. An experimental initiative to develop 'replacement' roost sites has recently commenced, aiming to entice the bats to leave problematic roosts in the middle of urban areas.

O.F.F MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2014

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.

BIRD WATCHING AT BOTANY BAY - 22nd March

Fifteen gathered at Sandringham on a beautiful Saturday morning to view the Bar-tailed Godwits before they departed on their annual migration to their northern hemisphere breeding grounds in the tundras of Alaska. There were several godwits, including some beautifully coloured rufous-brown males in their breeding plumage, busily probing the sand flats for their food, including Soldier Crabs and worms, to power their amazing migration.

Bar-tailed Godwits have been implanted with satellite tracking devices in New Zealand and one, known as E7 flew directly from New Zealand, non-stop for 10,200 km over 7.5 days, to the Yellow Sea in Korea. E7 spent about 5 weeks at the Yellow Sea re-fuelling, and then set off across Japan and the Bering Sea for another 7,200 km over 6 days to Alaska. E7 spent 3.5 months on the breeding grounds in Alaska, and at the end of August set off across the Pacific on a 11,500 km non-stop flight of 8.5 days to New Zealand. Bar-tailed Godwits from eastern Australia are thought to take similar migrations to the Alaskan tundras.

Other migratory shorebirds seen at Sandringham were the Eastern Curlew, and through the telescope at Towra Point Nature Reserve, a Whimbrel. These species also migrate to the high latitudes of the northern hemisphere. We saw a Red-capped Plover, Masked Lapwing, Crested Tern, and Pied Oystercatchers on Carter Shoals next to Towra Point Nature Reserve.

A couple of us ventured out to Boat Harbour rock platform on Cape Solander and saw several Golden Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, and Red-necked Stint coming into breeding plumage. They are about to depart for their northern hemisphere breeding grounds in the Arctic Circle. We will eagerly await their return from the breeding grounds next September/October. A few non-breeding migratory shorebirds will stay in Botany Bay over the austral winter.

[Report by Leader, Debbie Andrew]

GARDEN TOUR

The Menai Wildflower Group has created a beautiful native garden at the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade building and has offered to take workshop participants for a tour on 10th May at 12 noon, prior to the [Powerful Owl Training Workshop](#).

[See below in For Noting]

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

To avoid harm to people, possums, birds, snakes, and flying foxes use only wildlife-friendly netting, and fencing.

www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com

OFF CELEBRATION DINNER

Our Dinner will be on Friday 13th June 7-10pm at *The Gardens on Forest* 764 Forest Rd Peakhurst. \$55.00 p/p. You are invited to join fellow members who have already booked their place. Payment in full is due at the May Meeting (26th). You may pay by instalments up until then. Please check menu selection at Monday Meetings.

Contact Sue Howard ☎ 9579 1718 for payment and menu details, if unavailable to attend meetings.

THE GRAND RAFFLE

It will be held at the Annual Dinner on 13th June. Further items will be gratefully received at meetings, at my home or picked up from your home. Please check your cupboards for any unwanted gifts you may like to donate. Thank you.

[Sue Howard ☎95791718]

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall, Fredrick St Oatley [cnr. of Letitia St] starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month. Visitors and accompanied children are welcome at meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

- April 28th (Mon) 7.45pm monthly meeting** with [Dr Tom Grant](#) speaking on **Studying the Platypus**
- May 3rd (Sat) Field day to Scotland Island.** Meet at Church Point Wharf to catch the 10.30 ferry. We expect to be back at Church Point by 3.15. It takes up to 1½ hours to drive to Church Point (UBD pages 117-118). There is a café at the wharf. **Leader: Julian Sheen** - ☎ 9594 4888 📱 0415428744 [note his mobile number in case!]
- May 10th (Sat) Powerful Owl Training Workshop** 1pm hosted by the **Menai Wildflower Group** [see note below]
- May 10th (Sat) Rescheduled Field Day to Sydney Observatory** [see note below]
- May 26th (Mon) 7.45pm monthly meeting** with **Gary Schoer** speaking on **Red Rocks Blooming: Wildflowers in the Pilbara & beyond**
- May 31st (Sat) Field day to Kurnell, Whale watching.** **Leader: Graham Fry** - ☎ 9580 6621
- June 13th (Fri) O.F.F. Celebration Dinner at the Gardens on Forest at 7pm.** [See the note above]

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES

The [International Energy Agency](#) [IEA] notes that renewable energy is crucial to meeting future energy needs, and is already being integrated in a significant way in many countries. In Denmark, Italy, Germany, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal, wind and solar have captured between 10-30% of electricity generation. IEA finds that increasing renewable energy to 5-10% of the total poses no technical or economic challenges to the electricity system. There are however challenges ahead to enhance the reliability of renewable energy, and its growing part in energy production. [The Power of Transformation](#) www.iea.org/publications/roadmap

FAIRY POSSUMS FACE EXTINCTION

The Wilderness Society is [seeking support to protect](#) Victoria's gorgeous animal emblem. It is smaller than a human hand and notoriously shy. It is so elusive that it was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered in 1961 in the tall forests of the Central Highlands northeast of Melbourne. Mountain Ash forests there have existed for 60 million years, the Fairy Possum for 20 million. There is now a crisis in biodiversity in these forests, driven by the major change introduced in just the **last 100 years**. The global expert on the Fairy Possum, David Lindenmayer, has developed a suite of forest management prescriptions to help rescue the species. www.wilderness.org.au/



KOALA CONNECTIONS

An initiative of the Tweed and Byron Shires aims to provide a secure future for koalas on the NSW far north coast, to increase the area, quality and connectivity of koala habitat. The \$3.5m program will protect koalas and many other species of endangered fauna and flora through tree planting, weed control, community engagement, invasive vertebrate pest, and fire management. It is funded principally by a \$2m grant from the Federal Government's *Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund*. www.byron.nsw.gov.au/koala-connections. However, current road plans propose that an upgrade of the Pacific Highway is to pass through three Koala colonies near Ballina. www.echo.net.au/ballina-highway-route/



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NATIVE PLANTS OF OATLEY PARK

O.F.F has produced a photographic guide to the native plants of the Oatley Bushland Park. It is a tree-covered area at the junction of Georges River and Lime Kiln Bay, almost completely surrounded by water. Its 45 hectares is mainly of sandstone woodland with shrubby understory, and over 310 plant species have been recorded there. The park is an important regional sanctuary protecting a number of plant species not found elsewhere in the St George area. [native plants of Oatley Park](#) & off.oatleypark.com/flora.html

COAL SEAM GAS EXTRACTION

[Lock the Gate Alliance](#) is leading a move to protect Australia's cultural and agricultural resources from inappropriate mining. Governments and mining companies reject the claims, but there are [increasing indications](#) that CSG extraction may cause serious harm to the environment, farming land, water resources and human health; it may [even have some seismic consequences](#). Considering the warning signs, the lack of comprehensive research into its environmental and health impact is alarming. The law is currently in favour of coal seam gas expansion, and encouraging landowners to lock their gate may be the only way of slowing the pace of fracking until research is completed and effective safeguards are in place. www.echo.net.au/bentley-2000-protectors-site/ & australianmuseum.net.au

OBSERVATORY VISIT – MAY 10th

This has been rebooked for Sat, May 10th for an early session at 6.15pm with Saturn and Jupiter on view. Catch the 4.43 train from Oatley, 4.45 from Mortdale, arriving at Town Hall at 5.21, for a train to Circular Quay, and the 10-minute walk to the Observatory. We will meet any not coming by train outside the Observatory at 6pm. Session should take about 1½ hours. **Leader Alison Gilroy** ☎ 9580 5557

FOR NOTING

Myles Dunphy Streamwatch, next meets 9am on Tues April 29th. Details: Sharyn ☎9579 1262, Heather 📱 0425 291 879.

Oatley Heritage & Historical Society's next meeting will be on 23rd April, beginning at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL, with Jack Gray speaking about his early days in Oatley. www.oatleyheritagegroup.com

Powerful Owl Training Workshop 10th May hosted by Menai Wildflower Group. Location: Illawong Rural Fire Brigade building on Old Illawarra Rd, Illawong. 1.00pm to 3.30pm. Cost: Free. Register/questions david.bain@birdlife.org.au 📱 0421 337 545. Early arriving participants can join the [garden tour](#) at 12pm.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition

Australian Museum Mar 29 - 1 June, 9.30am - 5.00pm. See 100 powerful images selected from more than 40,000 entries worldwide and discover the amazing world we live in. See curious lions, fighting vultures, dancing dolphins and baby crocodiles playing with their mother. <http://australianmuseum.net.au/event/Wildlife-Photographer>

