



STUDYING THE PLATYPUS

Dr Tom Grant of UNSW spoke on this subject at the April 28th meeting, a research interest in which he has been involved for 40 years. www.publish.csiro.au/ While the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](http://www.iucn.org) (IUCN) classifies the status of the platypus as a 'species of least concern', Tom argued that it is more probable that the platypus is vulnerable, particularly due to its dependence on water in which to feed.



Spread along eastern Australia from Cooktown and to Tasmania, more investigation is needed to determine the current platypus population. Large numbers were trapped and shot in the 19th century, and there are remaining threats to their continued conservation. They are no longer found in the streams of the Adelaide Hills, Mount Lofty Ranges, and Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia, where they once occurred.

The Platypus is mobile, reclusive and active throughout the night but most often seen around dawn and dusk. The male has a poisonous spur that it may use in its defence, but is predominantly used against other males during the breeding season. Capture can be risky as they drown if caught and trapped underwater for too long. Radio-telemetry has been used to investigate platypus biology. When foraging, the platypus's main sensory organ is its bill, much more sensitive than its eyes and ears that are closed when underwater. It has receptors that detect touch, pressure, and electric fields from its prey.

Because platypus populations can be small or spread along rivers, and many animals are mobile, population numbers are difficult to determine accurately. [The Australian Platypus Conservancy](http://www.australianplatypusconservancy.org) encourages the public to report sightings of platypus as a way of determining population sizes at particular places.

The Platypus is protected, but threats to its survival include mortality in illegally set nets and traps, and habitat degradation. Natural and regulated high and low flows of water through rivers and creeks can damage nesting and feeding sites.

Fossils of ancient forms of platypus have been found in central Australia, but during the time when these species were there the areas were wet, not arid as they are now. The platypus is found in most areas where it was prior to European occupation of Australia, but its populations are probably lower.

Extreme weather events resulting from climate change are likely to decrease the size and distribution of platypus populations. They depend on a stable supply of water, and droughts can reduce current, distribution and numbers. Floods have a detrimental effect on juvenile platypus survival. Foxes are predators and some populations in Tasmania have been prone to a potentially fatal fungal disease causing ulcers and lesions. Use of illegal fishing nets is also a serious problem, as Platypus need to surface regularly to breathe. <http://www.platypus.asn.au> &

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/Platypus>

SCOTLAND ISLAND TRIP - 3RD MAY

It was raining in Oatley but the faithful who headed out for Pittwater, and got as far as Homebush, saw sunny skies ahead.

We found a good autumn day, windy and cool with the air as clear as crystal and the water alive with wind washed waves. After coffee at Church Point, we crossed to Tennis



Court on [Scotland Island](http://www.scotlandisland.com) and then slowly circumnavigated the island's narrow lanes with houses perched on the bush-covered hillsides and views of the water. Some summited the 120-metre peak at Elizabeth Park.

In the afternoon, the intrepid nine took the ferry across to Elvina Bay at the base of Kuring-Gai Chase National Park, passing [Dorothea Mackellar's](http://www.dorotheamackellar.com) house, beautifully tucked away in the bush at Lovett Bay. After an hour's walk in which we looked for, and (some say) found Chips Rafferty's house- others said it was Rafferty's rules - a fine colonial residence with remnants back to the mid-1800s, we picked up the ferry again back to Church Point.

Windblown and fresh faced we headed for the cars and the easy return to Oatley. It was a very good, robust days outing. [Report by Leader Julian Sheen]

SYDNEY OBSERVATORY FIELD DAY - 10TH MAY

Twenty-eight people took part in this event originally scheduled for March 3rd but postponed because of rain.

Unfortunately, it was cloudy so a view of the night sky was not possible, but there was much entertainment to be had in spite of the cloud cover. There were two short 3D films about Mars and the Universe, indicating the comparative sizes of planets and stars near us.

There was a very interesting viewing of the curved planetarium with timed movement of the stars, and various constellations. We saw the pattern of stars that were over our head at that time, but the clouds disappointed our hopes of viewing Saturn, Mars, and Jupiter. We then proceeded up to the old telescope, where we viewed the inverted and back-to-front image of the Balmain clock, and then moved over to the newer telescope, where the roof was opened briefly, but then shut because of light rain.

There is a very interesting little museum with various old timepieces, and telescopes, and we examined them outside the more formal presentations.

At the conclusion, some partook of refreshments nearby, before returning by train. In all it was a very entertaining evening. [Report by Leader Alison Gilroy]

OATLEY RAILWAY STATION UPGRADE



The proposed upgrade was on public display for a month until 12th May. The plan includes construction of a new lift and stair access from Oatley Pde and Mulga Rd [as envisaged here], new forecourts, more accessible

for parking, taxis and buses. <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/>

A study of the plan by [Biosis](http://www.biosis.com.au) concluded that the overall impact on native flora and fauna would be low, unlikely to result in a significant impact on threatened species, populations, or communities, and that additional approvals would not be required. www.transport.nsw.gov.au/assessmentpdf

COMING EVENTS

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. Meet at 9 am at Kurnell, end of Captain Cook Drive near the entrance gate to Botany Bay NP. We will consolidate cars and drive to Cape Solander. From there it is an easy 4-5km return walk to Cape Baily. We will stop at various locations to observe whales and take in the scenery. If using public transport, a bus is available by route 987 from Cronulla station leaving at 8:18am and goes to the meeting point. Wear solid shoes; bring lunch, water, and binoculars (if available). **Leader: Graham Fry** – ☎ 9580 6621

June 13th (Fri) O.F.F. Celebration Dinner at the Gardens on Forest at 7pm. [See the note above.]

June 23rd (Mon) 7.45pm monthly meeting with Nell Schofield speaking on *Our Land Our Water Our Future*; and introducing two movies on the effects of coal mining and coal seam gas extraction [see 2* notes below].

June 28th (Sat) Field day, Hoddle Track to Foxground viewpoint. **Leader: Graham Lalchere** - ☎9580 3107

July 28th (Mon) 7.45pm monthly meeting with Rodger Robertson speaking on Travelling the Silk Road

Aug 2nd (Sat) Field day to Blue Track (near ANSTO, Lucas Heights). **Leader J Cockayne** ☎ 9570 8559

MARINE SANCTUARIES THREATENED

The [Nature Conservation Council](#) [NCC] is concerned that the marine parks protecting our most incredible ocean animals—turtles, weedy sea dragons, and schools of big fish are under fire from the governments, and piece by piece, protections are being eroded. NCC stated that in the face of the biggest rollback of marine protection Australia has seen,



they are launching a major new initiative to safeguard the future of our Marine Parks. We can become a friend of our [favourite in](#)

[this initiative to protect our marine parks.](#)

COAL SEAM GAS [CSG]

The world is hunting for new sources of power generation not reliant on fossil fuel. While that search proceeds, gas is gradually replacing coal as our 'bridging fuel'. The mining industry is pursuing a vigorous campaign to expand CSG mining allegedly in the national interest, but [research suggests](#) that CSG may be hardly less environmentally damaging than coal.

[Nell Schofield*](#) is speaking to the [BMCS](#) on 1st June and to our meeting on 28th. Nell is the Sydney Campaign Coordinator with [Lock The Gate](#), and is currently working with several other environmental groups including the [Nature Conservation Council](#) and [Our Land Our Water Our Future](#) to get policy reform that protects land and water resources in NSW before next year's state election.

CLEARING UP THE CLIMATE DEBATE

The [Conversation](#), a well-regarded academic publication notes that the majority of the world's climate scientists agree [climate change is happening](#) and that there is clear evidence of human contribution to the change. Despite the scientific consensus, Australia is still deeply divided about what, (if anything) should be done about it. Australia's science community notes that some of the media are consistently distorting the facts of the matter.

theconversation.com/clearing-up-the-climate-debate

O.F.F. 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. Payment in full is due at the May 26th Meeting. You may pay by instalments up until then. Please check menu selection at Monday Meetings.

Our grand raffle will be held at the Dinner. Further items will be gratefully received at meetings, at Sue's home or picked up from your home. Please check your cupboards for any unwanted gifts you may like to donate. Thank you.

[Contact Sue Howard ☎ 9579 1718 for payment, menu details, and raffle gifts, if you are unavailable to attend meetings].

*OUR JUNE 23RD MEETING

Instead of the scheduled topic of Travels in Peru and Bolivia, it will now be a movie night. Our President, Graham Lalchere, attending a recent NPA meeting at Sutherland Environment Centre acquired copies of two new Australian movies from the *Lock the Gate Alliance* on the effects of coal mining and coal seam gas extraction. They are *Undermining Australia: Coal versus Communities*, and *Fractured Country: An Unconventional Invasion* (coal seam gas mining).

The movies will be introduced by Nell Schofield from *Lock the Gate*. Nell was going to speak about *Our Land Our Water Our Future* [OLOWOF] at the May meeting after Gary Schoer's presentation, but it seemed more appropriate that she also take us through the movies relevant to the many concerns about coal mining and coal seam gas. The two ground breaking ½ hour documentaries [if time permits] feature the personal stories of Australians whose lives have been changed forever, and their courageous efforts to protect the country we love.

FOR NOTING

Australia's first Repair Café opened on 14th May at The Bower, 34/142 Addison Rd Marrickville with experts free to help you make repairs to any household broken items. More at: repaircafe.org/about-repair-cafe/gm@bower.org.au

Myles Dunphy Streamwatch, next meets 9am on Tues May 27th. Sharyn ☎9579 1262, Heather ☎0425 291 879.

Oatley Heritage & Historical Society Next meeting will be on May 30th, beginning at 10.30 am at the Oatley RSL, with Jack Gray speaking about his early days in Oatley. [Sorry about the error last time] www.oatleyhistory.org.au

Urban Bushland a Refuge for Geckos, a scientific paper by Matthew Mo has been published by the [Australian Zoologist](#). More details at off.oatleypark.com/

Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition *Australian Museum until 1st 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. australianmuseum.net.au/

