



### HEALTH OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

[WWF-Australia](#) says a damning report exposes failures that have resulted in UNESCO being misled on the health of the Great Barrier Reef, and that nitrogen, sediment and pesticide pollution are a major cause of reef decline. In particular, nitrogen leads to outbreaks of coral-eating crown of thorns starfish. For the last few years Australian government reef report cards have told the public and UNESCO that pollution levels were improving. However, an audit by the State of Queensland has found that these improvements cannot be relied on. The audit found other problems including poor government management, low uptake of best management programs by farmers, and increased land clearing in reef catchments. "This report clearly validates UNESCO's latest decision on the reef, which puts Australia on probation until real results are achieved, including actual reductions in pollution levels," said Dermot O'Gorman, WWF-Australia CEO."

[http://wwf.panda.org/who\\_we\\_are/wwf\\_offices/](http://wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/wwf_offices/)

### URANIUM MINING IN KAKADU

Planning must begin now for the future of uranium mining at Kakadu National Park. According to the traditional owners, uranium mining cannot "go on forever" in Kakadu. The operator of the controversial uranium mine, *Energy Resources of Australia* (ERA), [announced](#) that it would not proceed to a feasibility study to extend the life of the mine. The Australian Conservation Foundation's Dave Sweeney said the news was "significant and positive." "We have long maintained that the project is poorly considered, risky and dangerous. It is good news for Kakadu in this very contentious and long-running story of uranium mining in Australia's largest national park."

Mr Sweeney said "This operation has never made economic sense; uranium [has been] particularly unviable since the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima plant in Japan."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/> & <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-09/>

### TREES ON THE WANE

There are more than three trillion trees worldwide, but that is only half as many as were around at the start of human civilisation, according to new research.

A study, published in the science journal [Nature](#), updates the estimate for the total number and density of trees on Earth. It found that each year more than 15 billion trees are lost through a combination of [deforestation](#), disturbances such as fire, and changes in land use. Since the beginning of human civilisation, the world has lost 46% of its trees.

The research team, led by Thomas Crowther, postdoctoral fellow at the Yale University, School of Forestry and Environmental studies, challenges previous estimates from satellite data by using more than 400,000 on-ground tree density estimates to produce the first [complete global map](#) of trees.

### OATLEY LIONS FESTIVAL - 17<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

OFF ran a stall at the Lions Festival, as it has done for many years. It was a lovely and successful day. Lots of friends and other interesting and interested people dropped in. Many thanks to those who helped set up the stall, and to those who staffed it during the day. Just an hour or so assisting was a great help.



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

### CLEAN WATER

As [The Conversation](#) notes, much of the world still lacks clean, safe water. Progress on sanitation is [falling far short](#) of the United Nations' [Millennium Development Goals](#). The scale of the problem is [highlighted by India](#), where most sewage is dumped untreated into rivers and streams. Worldwide, contaminated water is implicated in [85% of all illness](#).

An even more pernicious problem with the world's water is widespread [contamination with antibiotics](#), fueling the rise of resistant superbugs. A recent survey in China estimated that [53,800 tons of waste drugs are entering the environment each year](#). Water is in urgent need of a cleanup. Installing or upgrading sewer networks and sewage treatment plants, and implementing regulations to curb the release of [antimicrobials](#) into waterways, will be crucial.

<http://theconversation.com/cleaning-up-the-worlds-water>

### WASTE INTO ENERGY

Echonetdaily notes that a study, funded by the *Office of Environment and Heritage* (OEH) and *Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers* (RDA-NR), has opted to investigate a potential renewable energy source. Tweed Shire is supporting the cutting-edge regional project to convert organic trade, household and industry waste into a renewable-energy source. The [Northern Rivers Biohub](#) study will encourage community and businesses to get involved by providing the biomass (such as trade, agricultural and food waste, parks and garden clippings) for conversion to energy through technologies such as [anaerobic digestion](#), gasification and direct combustion.

[www.echo.net.au/2015/09/](http://www.echo.net.au/2015/09/) & <http://sustainnorthernrivers.org/>

### BLUE MOUNTAINS 200 YEARS AGO

On 26<sup>th</sup> April 1815 Governor Macquarie, accompanied by his wife and a party of dignitaries set out on a coach trip across the Blue Mountains on the newly completed road. On the way Macquarie named Springwood, Blackheath, Mount York, Cox's Pass, Vale of Clywdd, Cox's River and then Bathurst, on the banks of the Macquarie River. A few years later, the Blue Mountains first building was established by Macquarie - a military post at Springwood. The site was on Macquarie Road between Homedale and Short Streets and a commemorative plaque is in place there. <http://www.bluemts.com.au/history-detail/>

### BLUE MOUNTAINS ENVIRONMENT UNDER THREAT

The Blue Mountains is a unique area — one that has been in the making for hundreds of millions of years. It is part of the system of National Parks in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, globally recognised for its outstanding universal values by UNESCO. However, the NSW Department of Planning is now recommending that key heritage and environmental provisions be downgraded. Many are protesting such a move and urging others to support them. See the BMCS [Letter to the Minister for planning](#)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Oct 26<sup>th</sup> (Mon) Meeting 7.45pm** with [Dr Ian Wright](#) speaking on "Coal mining & water pollution in the Sydney Basin"
- Oct 31<sup>st</sup> (Sat) Field day, walk Rose Bay to Watsons Bay** with famous views, bushland tracks, and historic landmarks. The walking is not difficult, and the distance not great, but the rewards are significant. Board the third carriage from Oatley at 9.13 or at Mortdale at 9.15. At Edgecliff, transfer to the 324/5 bus. Alternatively, you can join us at the Rose Bay Wharf at 11am. After the walk, at Watsons Bay, you can choose: a) the South Head walk, b) a ferry to Circular Quay or c) a bus to Bondi Junction. **Leader: Julian Sheen** ☎ 0415 4287 44
- Nov 20<sup>th</sup> (Fri) Field day Brooklyn The Riverboat Postman cruise** up the Hawkesbury River [originally Sat 28<sup>th</sup> Nov]. We will catch the 7:59am train at Oatley to Central and change to a Central Coast service that leaves at 8:45am. We leave the train at Hawkesbury River and walk about 100m to the wharf, the steps at the station are steep so be careful. On the cruise, we are provided with both morning tea and lunch, we return at 1pm. With appropriate train connections, we should be home by 4pm. The cruise will cost \$44, payable on the day; the company asks that if possible we have the right money so we can board without delay. We only have seven vacancies left, so if you wish to come please contact the Leader, **Graham Fry** ☎ 95806621.
- Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) Meeting & Social Supper 7.45pm** with [Dr Arthur White](#) speaking on "Ghost Bats & Cane Toads"
- Dec 7<sup>th</sup> (Mon) Christmas Picnic / BBQ**

**SEPT 28<sup>TH</sup>: TALK ON TRAVELS THROUGH ETHIOPIA**

At our September meeting OFF member, Jennifer Whaithe guided us along the trail less travelled, to the populous African nation of Ethiopia, a land that has surreptitiously changed the face of Oatley over the past decade or so. "What!" I hear you say. Well, Ethiopia is the origin of the humble coffee bean!

Ethiopia is one of the most fascinating, and little known, countries in Africa. Prehistorically it is widely considered the region from which *Homo sapiens* first set out for the **Middle East** and points beyond. Historically it is the only African nation to have defeated a European colonial power and retained its sovereignty. Subsequently, many African nations adopted the colours of Ethiopia's flag following their independence.

During her travels, Jennifer saw the source of the Blue Nile, (perhaps) the palace of the Queen of Sheba, the incredible rock churches of Lalibela carved out of the surrounding stone, and the fourth most holy city in the Muslim world, Harar. Jennifer wound up the travels with an adventurous trek in the remotely beautiful Simien Mountains that saw her burgled of most of her possessions during a thunderstorm. Fortunately, she lived to tell the tale to forty appreciative members and guests. [Summary by Matt Allison, Program officer]

**NO NEW COAL MINES**

The Australia Institute [TAI] recently launched a petition to the President of France asking him to put coal exports on the agenda for the *Climate Change Talks* in Paris in December, and to request a global moratorium on new coalmines.

TAI states, "There is no room for more coal mines in a world economy that is tackling climate change. If Australia succeeds in its coal export ambitions, the world will fail in its efforts to tackle global warming".

"Our research shows that the coal industry does not employ many people, or pay much tax, but it does receive billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded subsidies from state and federal governments. Our research also shows preventing new mines from going ahead would be beneficial to the economy." TAI's petition is at [www.nonewcoalmines.org.au](http://www.nonewcoalmines.org.au). More information is at [Blue Mountains Hut News](#) & [Grandparents for Generational Equity](#)

**OATLEY PARK FLOWERS IN OCTOBER**

The monthly 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.](#)

**SNOWY MOUNTAINS SUMMER EXCURSION**

It is an OFF tradition to spend a week in the Snowy Mountains in January. The Smiggin Holes Hotel Chalet, the usual accommodation, has converted its common room into another unit. The alternative lounge is much smaller and without the atmosphere of the former common room. Alternatively, we may lodge at Charlottes Pass where rates are lower, but there is only one large, shared kitchen. We would like to hear from members.

a) Would you like to join an unofficial OFF trip to the Snowy Mountains next January?

b) If so, would you like to stay at Smiggins Chalet or at Charlottes Pass? Please contact Graham Fry or Liz Cameron (☎ 9580 6621, [fryg@zipworld.com.au](mailto:fryg@zipworld.com.au) or [lizc@pacific.net.au](mailto:lizc@pacific.net.au))

**FOR NOTING**

**Dorvanthes** – Details about this Southern Sydney Journal of Art, Heritage and Natural History at: [dorvanthes.info/](http://dorvanthes.info/)

**Membership renewal for 2016** can be by direct bank transfer – [more info when the renewal notice is sent out]. New members are welcome. Click here for [details](#).

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

**Oatley Heritage & Historical Soc. [OHHS]** Next meeting 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 10.15 Oatley library, coffee and chat. <http://www.oatleyhistory.org.au/>

**Speakers:** 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.

**Walks:** Our Field Officer is looking for people to lead interesting walks next year. Contact Graham ☎9580 6621

**WE ARE MOVING TO OATLEY RSL !!!!**

The OFF Committee has resolved that our meetings will be relocated to the Oatley RSL, commencing with the AGM on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016.

This decision was not taken lightly, and there is some regret at ending a long and cordial association with the Uniting Church.

The new venue is suitable in many ways, with better acoustics, clearer sound system, better projector, and screen, and comfortable seating. It also has more parking.

The RSL has few activities on Monday nights and closes earlier than usual - at 9.30. Therefore, it has been resolved to start our meetings slightly earlier, at 7.30. Those attending should be RSL members (\$6 for one year or \$12 for three years), or be signed in before meetings.

Most OFF people are already RSL members and can assist visitors by signing them in.