



# OFF News

## Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc.

Protecting the local environment since 1955

<http://off.oatleypark.com>

Issue 5/15

May/June 2015

### OFF's SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY

The Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society began on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1955 with a meeting at the home of Rafael and Moyia Kowron. On May 14<sup>th</sup> a great celebration of this 60<sup>th</sup> year was held at *Gardens on Forest*. Invited guests from NCC, the Menai Wildflower Group, and Lock the Gate Alliance joined fifty members for a very happy evening to celebrate this significant milestone. More on the history is in Alan Fairley's [Being Green, The First 50 Years 1955-2005](#) and in OFF News 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition in 2005. [offnews05novdec.pdf](#)



President Graham Lalchere talked of the continuing threats, and the current work and achievements of OFF in response to the challenges to the natural environment.

Past president Julian Sheen entertained us with a peep into the history of wilderness, the development of Oatley and the iconic Oatley Park. He began with the untouched wilderness stretching across the land with change, sometimes slow as sea levels rose and fell, sometimes quick and severe with fire and flood. Moving through the years, he spoke briefly of the contribution of the Aborigines, the impact of the colonialists, and ending with factors in the development of Oatley Park. He concluded, "Oatley Flora and Fauna is now a strong society ready to continue the guardianship of our natural environment; as we work to sustain our bushland, we also sustain ourselves. The need is apparent and people have proved over the generations to be ready for the task."

Our thanks go to Sue Howard who organised the celebration. The service was attentive, the meal delicious and the company jovial. At the end of the evening, Trevor Revis entertained us with his singing. [More and photos on the website](#)

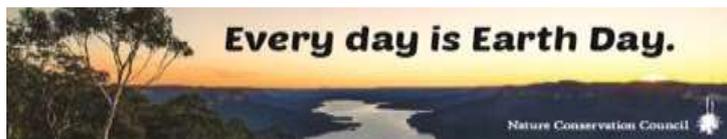
### SUNSHINE STATE SWITCHES ON SOLAR ARRAY

Queensland has flicked the switch on its largest solar array outside Gatton, 90km west of Brisbane, to harness the state's annual 2700 hours of sunlight.

Built on a former 10ha airstrip at the University of Queensland's (UQ) Gatton campus, the 3.275 MW Gatton Solar Research Facility has some 37,000 thin-film photovoltaic (PV) panels.

The PV modules from project partner *First Solar* will produce enough clean energy to power more than 450 average sized homes, according to UQ's Global Change Institute, and will displace the equivalent of 5600 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

*First Solar* managed the facility's engineering and construction and supplied the panels. For the first time in Australia; multiple PV mounting technologies including fixed-tilt, single-axis and dual-axis tracker technologies will operate side-by-side in the same field. [www.engineersaustralia.org.au/](http://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/)



Each year, Earth Day -- April 22 -- marks the anniversary of what many consider the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. <http://www.nature.org.au/> & <http://www.earthday.org/>

### THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN BIGHT

The Wilderness Society [TWS] notes that 80-90% of all oil spills happen during the exploratory drilling phase. Where BP wants to drill in the Great Australian Bight, the waters are remote and wild – making it even more complicated than usual. This means we may face a higher chance of an oil spill in our waters. Kangaroo Island is a jewel in Australia's crown of natural wonders. This gem of an island



has pristine water and some of the best beaches in Australia. The currents that flow from Antarctica and through the Bight give Kangaroo Island a unique mix of ocean life and have a greater diversity of

marine life than the Great Barrier Reef.

<https://www.wilderness.org.au/campaigns/>

### AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST NATIONAL PARK

TWS also notes that Rio Tinto and Alcoa have decided to hand back bauxite-mining leases that threatened the spectacular Mitchell Plateau. This enables the Western Australian Government to proceed with plans to create Australia's largest national park. Wilderness Society campaigners and members, together with other environmentalists and Traditional Owners, have campaigned since the 1980s to protect the Mitchell from bauxite mining. <http://wilderness.org.au/articles/>

### THE EASTERN DWARF TREE FROG



One of the items in *Backyard Buddies April B-mail 2015* is about this very common frog, so small you might miss it if you're not looking—they're about the size of a thumbnail. Luckily they will be making some noise this month to help you spot them. The Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog has no trouble

spotting you. They have amazing eyesight to help them find and catch fast moving food like mosquitoes and moths, and to keep a lookout for predators. <http://www.backyardbuddies.net.au/>

### CHINA CLOSING COAL-FIRED GENERATORS

China is closing the last of Beijing's four major coal-fired power plants to curb pollution rates averaging more than twice the country's national standard.

The plan is to replace the coal-fired power plants with natural gas facilities with twice the capacity. Across China, the government has shut down more than 2000 small coal mines since 2013, and it is leading the world in renewable energy production, mainly hydroelectric and wind power.

In 2014, China's electricity consumption grew at its slowest pace for the first time in 16 years. The country's carbon dioxide emissions fell by 2% last year, the first drop in 12 years. <http://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/> & <http://www.nature.com/>

### OFF LENDING LIBRARY

Available for borrowing at meeting nights

1. A History of the Blue Labyrinth
2. A Natural for World Heritage - the First National Park
3. Michael Mobbs' Sustainable Food
4. Michael Mobbs' Sustainable House

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 25th (Mon) Meeting 7.45pm** with [OEH](#) Officer Ben Hope speaking on Vertebrate Fauna of North Sydney Reserves "trapped on camera".

**May 27th (Wed) Field day: Kemps Creek SITA ADVANCED TREATMENT facility [SAWT] tour** - see waste turned into a resource. Leader: Alison Gilroy

**May 31st (Sun) Field day: The Spit to Manly Walk**, one of the most spectacular walks around Sydney, through [Sydney Harbour National Park](#). Bring morning tea and drinks; refreshments available at the Clontarf Kiosk. Morning tea will be a picnic at Grotto Point. The walk is 10km, about 3-4 hours. We will lunch at Manly, and then ferry back to the city. Catch the 8.13am train at Oatley [8.15 Mortdale]; change at Town Hall for Wynyard. At Wynyard walk to bus [Stand D](#) for no 180 bus to Collaroy Plateau [prepay only]. Leave the bus at Parriwi Rd stop before Spit Bridge. Leader: Erica Buzo. ☎8920 0926; 📠 0400 481 806

**June 22nd (Mon) Meeting 7.45pm** with Alan Fairley featuring "A trip around Gujarat, Western India."

**June 27th (Sat) Field day: Cowan to Taffys Rock via Jerusalem Bay**, with stunning views of Hawkesbury River. Leader: Adrian Buzo.

**July 27th (Mon) Meeting 7.45pm** with Chris Lloyd speaking on Seabirds.

**Aug 1st (Sat) Field day: Maddens Creek and Bulli Tops**, view the source of the Georges River. Leader: Sharyn Cullis

**Aug 24th (Mon) Meeting 7.45pm** with Leroy Gonsalves speaking on "Microbat predation on mosquitoes"

BHUTAN – THE DRAGON KINGDOM: APRIL 27<sup>TH</sup>

Graham Fry's talk about this intriguing Himalayan country drew an audience of 57. In April 2013 Graham and Liz visited Bhutan during a tour of the 'wrinkled edge of the sub-continent'. Their group flew into Paro near the capital Thimphu and drove east in a small bus. Their route traversed a series of high passes and deep valleys that challenge road builders and divide the largely rural population into many ethnic and linguistic groups.

It was spring; rhododendrons and primulas were flowering in the montane forests, and apple, and peach blossom was appearing on farms along the snow-fed river valleys. In the eastern lowlands lemongrass, mandarins and bananas were under cultivation. All tour groups must be accompanied by a licensed Bhutanese guide and theirs was a forester expert in locating rare and spectacular birds including Satyr Tragopan, Beautiful Nuthatch, and Rufous-necked Hornbill. Bhutan is a biodiversity hotspot and its constitution requires 60% of the country to remain forested.

It is developing rapidly, but strives to maintain its traditional cultural, spiritual, environmental, and ethical values, towards improving Gross National Happiness. The constitution states, "It is the fundamental duty of every citizen to contribute to the protection of the natural environment, conservation of the rich biodiversity of Bhutan and prevention of all forms of ecological degradation."

The major sources of income are export of hydroelectricity to India, and tourism. Tourism is controlled by limiting visas and setting a high threshold for daily expenditure; a tourism royalty contributes to social services for disadvantaged citizens. Of thirteen traditional crafts practised in Bhutan, the most famous is weaving; Graham and Liz displayed examples during their talk, and the website describes some of the techniques, equipment, and fibres used:

<http://www.craftrevival.org/>. The map will open up more as well.

## SYDNEY HARBOUR WALK

The Walk scheduled for May 2<sup>nd</sup> was postponed because of the bad weather forecast, and is now set for May 31<sup>st</sup>.

## AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOC NSW AGM

The AGM and quarterly gathering is on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May. East Hills Group will be hosting the event at the Lugarno Uniting Church, 909 Forest Road Lugarno, opposite the Chivers Hill shopping centre. Those attending need to bring their own lunch or purchase it locally.

In the morning, guided walks will be available in Oatley Park in conjunction with OFF. Access to the park is from Oatley Park Ave, Oatley. In the afternoon, after the AGM, the guest speakers will be Jeremy Smith, from the Wildflower Farm at Somersby, and a representative from Neutrog Fertilisers.



## OUR LONE PINE



The Pine Tree in Oatley Park.

There is a history of collecting cones with seeds from the original Lone Pine tree at Gallipoli and returning them to Australia for planting. The best-known planting in southern Sydney is the tree at the entry gates of Oatley Park. It apparently was planted in 1920, grown from cones collected by Owen John Davies. Owen's ashes are scattered at the base of

the tree. [From an article by Alan Fairley in the May edition of Doryanthes\*] See also [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone\\_Pine\\_\(tree\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_Pine_(tree))

## PROTECTING THE HABITAT OF THE PYGMY POSSUM

EDO notes that the threatened Eastern Pygmy Possum on the NSW central coast will be protected after the High Court rejected an appeal by a developer against Gosford Council rejection of an application to build a waste recovery facility on a possum habitat site. Gosford Council argued that the proposed facility would have an irreversible impact on the pygmy possum, a threatened species. <http://www.edonsw.org.au/>

## FOR NOTING

**D**oryanthes\* Details about this Southern Sydney Journal of Art, Heritage and Natural History at: [doryanthes.info/](http://doryanthes.info/)

**M**embership of OFF Have you renewed yet? Details of Membership and means of joining are on our [website](#).

**M**yles Dunphy Streamwatch, next meets at 9am on Tues May 25<sup>th</sup>. [Details: Sharyn ☎9579 1262, Heather 📠 0425 291 879].

**O**atley Heritage & Historical Soc. May 29<sup>th</sup> 10.30 Oatley ORSL Cliff Crane will present further research into Queen's Hall.



Cat & mouse