



### WATTLE DAY - WHY 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER?

If you are of my generation, you might remember celebrating Wattle Day at school on 1<sup>st</sup> August, an appropriate date in Sydney when the local wattles are in flower in our bushland. These include *Acacia longifolia*, *A. linifolia*, *A. terminalis*, *A. suaveolens*, *A. floribunda*, and *A. decurrens*. Wattle Day was held in NSW on 1<sup>st</sup> August as early as 1916. So, why is it now celebrated on 1<sup>st</sup> September?



NSW was steam-rolled by Victoria for a common national day of celebration. In Melbourne, wattles flower later as the weather is cooler, and Victoria had a tradition of Wattle Day on 1<sup>st</sup> September. There was a Wattle Club in Victoria as early as 1899 and 1<sup>st</sup> September was their day of commemoration. Wattle as our national floral emblem was proclaimed on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1988, but it was not finally agreed to be the national date until 1992. NSW lost out to Victoria, and to make matters worse, the proclaimed national floral emblem is Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), not occurring in the Sydney region. [Alan Fairley]

### BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY

[EDO](#) notes the Federal Government is seeking comment on a review of the first five years of Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. The review will assess its operation and implementation since 2010, its alignment with domestic and international biodiversity conventions and agreements, and examine ways to improve reporting, monitoring, and durability. Submissions are invited until 11<sup>th</sup> Sept.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/conservation>

### THE CLIEFDEN CAVES

The NSW government is currently planning to build a dam on the Belubula River near Canowindra, which would flood and destroy the [Cliefden Caves](#).

The many natural treasures found there include ancient caves with pristine formations, habitats for endangered bat species, and over 100 species of fossils found nowhere else in the world; to this can be added a rare thermal spring. The *Save Cliefden Caves Association* is working to protect the Caves for future generations from these rushed proposals, [www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/hutnews/) [www.savecliefdencaves.org.au](http://www.savecliefdencaves.org.au)

### CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

The Citizens' Climate Lobby [CCL] beginning in the U.S. in 2008 now has members in Queensland and Western Australia. George Carrard, an OFF member, is helping spread it in NSW, and in particular in the St George area. He is organising meetings in Oatley (dates yet to be arranged) and he hopes that members of OFF will attend.

More at <http://au.citizensclimatelobby.org/>

### EL NINO 2015

The El Nino continues to strengthen in the Pacific, more than the monster event of 1997-98, according to the Bureau of Meteorology [BoM]. All the key regions of the equatorial Pacific used to monitor El Ninos have recorded sea-surface temperatures of 1°C above average for 10 consecutive weeks. That is two weeks longer than the previous record set in 1997, the bureau notes in its [fortnightly El Nino update](#). The climate models surveyed by BoM indicate El Nino is likely to strengthen, and persist into 2016, possibly until April. <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/weather/> <http://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/>

### COPPER MINERS TURNING TO SOLAR POWER

The DeGrussa copper mine in Western Australia is soon to construct Australia's largest off-grid solar power and energy storage facility. The project is expected to have a significant impact on diesel consumption and carbon emissions at the site, saving 12,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. The solar panels will be spread over 20 ha, with 6 MW of battery storage. Once completed, it will be one of the world's largest integrated solar installations providing peak load power to a mining operation. <http://www.miningaustralia.com.au/>



### PROTECT FAIRY POSSUM HABITAT

*The Wilderness Society* notes that the tiny Fairy (Leadbeater's) Possum needs the magnificent Victorian Mountain Ash to live in. It is the tallest flowering plant on Earth, over 100 metres.



In May, the Fairy Possum was rated as [critically endangered](#), or one-step away from extinction in the wild. Yet its valuable forest habitat is being logged, mostly to make cheap copy paper. A Forest Industry Taskforce is convening

to consider the best options for future management of these forests, but as the gears of government grind forward, the Mountain Ash continues to fall. [See more at: <http://www.wilderness.org.au/>]

### THE LIME KILN BAY WETLANDS

This recently released brochure is part of OFF's *Lime Kiln Bay Wetland Awareness Project*, designed to raise awareness in the local community of the importance of the wetland, to promote increased involvement and behavioural change, and to reduce detrimental environmental impacts.



Then Matt Mo's latest publication on The Lime Kiln Bay Wetland provides the first comprehensive description of the amphibians and reptiles at the site from

observations made between 2006 and 2014. 23 species were detected: 6 frogs (Hylidae, Limnodynastidae, and Myobatrachidae), 1 freshwater turtle (Cheluidae), 12 lizards (Agamidae, Carphodactylidae, Scincidae, Varanidae), and 4 snakes (Colubridae, Elapidae, Pythonidae). More at [off.oatleypark.com/LIME-KILN-WETLANDS](http://off.oatleypark.com/LIME-KILN-WETLANDS) & <http://off.oatleypark.com>.

### OATLEY PARK WALKING TOUR: TUES 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPT

The Tour will be on Wattle Day, from 10am to 12noon. Hurstville City Library Museum & Gallery will host this special event to enjoy the spring wildflowers in Oatley Park. The event will celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society's commitment to protecting the Park. OFF will provide morning tea in The Castle afterwards.

Bookings are essential. Visit the Hurstville City Library Museum Gallery webpage: <http://img.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug 24<sup>th</sup> (Mon) Meeting 7.45pm with [Leroy Gonsalves](#) speaking on "Microbat predation on mosquitoes"

Sept 19<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day to [Camden Park House and garden](#). Originally the home of John and Elizabeth Macarthur, the home is open only one weekend a year, on Sat Sept 19<sup>th</sup> from 12 noon to 4pm. To get there, follow signs from Elizabeth Macarthur Ave, South Camden. House and Garden Tour - adults \$15, concession \$12 and family \$40; garden only -\$10. It is not readily accessible by public transport so those who would like to go but lack transport contact **Leader: Graham Fry** ☎9580 6621 who will try to arrange a lift for you. **NB** This is an informal OFF outing; there will be no central meeting point and no signing on or off, which means people can arrive and depart when they wish.

Sept 26/7<sup>th</sup> Weekend Field Trip Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances we have had to cancel this field activity.

Sept 28<sup>th</sup> (Mon) Meeting 7.45pm with [Jennifer Whaite](#) speaking on "Travels through Ethiopia"

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 Rose Bay to Watsons Bay - explore the southern side of Sydney Harbour. **Leader Julian Sheen**

Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) Meeting & Social Supper 7.45pm with [Dr Arthur White](#) speaking on "Ghost Bats & Cane Toads"

Nov 28<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field day Brooklyn - [The Riverboat Postman cruise](#) up the Hawkesbury River. **Leader: Graham Fry**

Dec 7<sup>th</sup> (Mon) Christmas Picnic / BBQ

JULY 27<sup>TH</sup> TALK ON SEABIRDS

44 members and guests braved the chills and attended Chris Lloyd's talk. We were treated to another night of information peppered with Chris's down-to-earth humour. The title: "Real birds eat squid" was a clue that we were in for a bit of fun. The Albatross featured highly in the talk, and we learnt about their lives, partnering, prey, and most alarming, their vulnerability to long-line fishing practices, profusion of plastics and, of course, climate change. Without a huge change in human activity, the albatross, like so many of earth's magnificent species, faces extinction.

Chris' hands-on involvement with the iconic albatross has its up and downs; gentle natures can turn abruptly and leave a well-meaning scientist reeling from a close encounter with a specimen's large beak.

We learnt about the Five Islands off Wollongong and their importance in providing nesting sites for thousands of seabirds. Unfortunately, the suitable habitat on these islands is under threat from weeds such as kikuyu, coprosma, and bitou bush. Bush regeneration work is ongoing, but more volunteers are required to improve conditions for threatened birds. If you have experience, time on your hands and harbour a thirst for ocean adventure do let Chris know.

## MADDENS CREEK AND BULLI TOPS WALK

This walk of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aug was the second led by Sharyn Cullis this year, exploring sections of Dharawal NP. 26 members and friends enjoyed a very satisfying day divided into two sections. In the morning, we walked to Maddens Creek, one of the sources of the Georges River, and explored the area with a small waterfall. We lunched at Sublime Point enjoying sublime views of the south coast. Some of our party left after lunch, while an intrepid 10 continued on the second part - a steep descent of the escarpment to Austinmer. While only a 1km, it was a drop of 350m and most had very wobbly knees at the bottom. A former president of OFF had a lift waiting for him at the bottom while the rest of us tackled the climb back up. After 1146 steps and a number of stops, we eventually arrived, very satisfied with our achievement, albeit with tired legs and ankles. Great day, thanks Sharyn!

## MACLEAY AND NICHOLSON MUSEUMS, SYDNEY UNI

Eighteen gathered at the University on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July. Many were fortified by a coffee enroute, and some had already attended a rally against further mining by Wollongong Coal beneath Sydney's water catchment.

At the Macleay Museum, Curatorial Assistant Rob Blackburn gave an introductory talk on the history of the Museum and led us to explore it. The main attraction was a temporary exhibition of finely decorated kangaroo-skin cloaks and feathered headdresses and belts made by two Wiradjuri women artists; a video demonstrated the techniques they used to create the works. The Macleay collections include natural history specimens, ethnological articles, historic photos, and early scientific equipment. The diverse objects in the cedar display cabinets elicited many questions.

After an hour at the Macleay, the group strolled through to the Nicholson Museum housing the largest collection of antiquities in the Southern Hemisphere. The [50 Objects 50 Stories](#) display describes the intriguing, sometimes bizarre history of items selected from the collection of over 30,000 artefacts of artistic and archaeological significance, from Egypt, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, and the Near East.

The extent of the exhibits warrants a second visit. The outing concluded with a leisurely lunch in the Courtyard Café and shared reminiscences of the University.

Both museums and the Art Gallery are free; and open Monday to Friday and the first Saturday of the month. [Report by Leader Liz Cameron, more at <http://sydney.edu.au/museums>]

## FAST RAIL - NOT ANOTHER AIRPORT!

Ross Coster has a very interesting article in BMCS latest [Hut News](#) on High Speed Rail [HSR]. He notes that the [Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development](#) has released reports on HSR, detailing the route, stations, speeds, costs, and patronage of the proposed network. These show that HSR can reduce travel times, noise impacts, promote development in Regional areas along the route, and allow people to travel in comfort. The HSR can be run on electricity from renewable sources, with little or no pollution, or greenhouse gas emissions.

**The time to build the HSR link to Canberra and Melbourne is now.** If the Western Sydney Airport is built, no politicians will risk the financial impact of HSR on airports. More at <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/campaign-airport-fastrail.htm> & [suggested action in badgerys-flyer-17jun15.pdf](#)

## FOR NOTING

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

**G**reater Sydney Landcare Network is a network of community groups working to protect, restore and improve the natural environment. [Much more at <http://greatersydneylandcare.org/>]

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

**O**atley Heritage & Historical Soc. Next meeting 28<sup>th</sup> Aug 10.30 RSL special 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event. <http://www.oatleyhistory.org.au/>

