



OFF News

Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc.

Protecting the local environment since 1955

<http://off.oatleypark.com>

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AUSTRALIA SINKS ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDEX

The 2016 *Environmental Performance Index*, released every two years by Yale University in the US, has dropped Australia's ranking by 10 places to 13th out of 180 nations in its latest update, and to 150th out of the 180 on carbon emission trends from the power sector. <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/>



ECOSYSTEM DEGRADATION

The *Conservation* journal notes that it is a question of "when" rather than "if" the Great Barrier Reef will be placed on the [List of World Heritage in Danger](#). Reports paint a bleak picture of the reef's future. With 93% of individual reefs showing bleaching, the devastation among researchers, celebrities and the public is palpable.

Unfortunately, [mass coral bleaching is just one example](#) of a far broader problem. Although it represents a rapid and extensive example of ecosystem degradation, coral bleaching is not surprising: it is consistent with many changes that are occurring now across Australia's natural environments.

Tim Stephens, University of Sydney Institute of Marine Science notes that "The biggest threats to the reef are climate change and ocean acidification. Australia now has no legislated policy to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions causing the waters to warm, and change their chemistry".

[//theconversation.com/the-state-of-the-GBR-experts-respond](http://theconversation.com/the-state-of-the-GBR-experts-respond)

BOTANIST PUPPIES

[ABC News](#) notes that highly trained sniffer dogs have been successfully used for the first time in Australia to detect a noxious weed posing a threat to the environment and agriculture. Two "botanist puppies" and their expert handlers have located in Kosciuszko National Park considerable [mouse-ear hawkweed](#), an invasive perennial herb, imported from Europe for horticulture, later banned from sale due to its invasive nature. The dogs can differentiate one plant from another, very much like [human] botanists.



THE LONG NOSED BANDICOOT

The Long-nosed Bandicoots on Sydney Harbour's North Head are recognised as a discrete population, listed as endangered under NSW legislation. AWC, in collaboration with the NPWS, undertakes regular monitoring of the Bandicoot population on North Head. Current estimates are around 110 surviving. In order to improve the effectiveness of conservation measures AWC is investigating their social biology and methods of improving their habitat. <http://www.australianwildlife.org/sanctuaries/>



STOP COAL WRECKING THE GARDENS OF STONE

The *Colong Foundation* notes that *Centennial Coal* is seeking approval for extensions to longwall mining in the Gardens of Stone that would impact on Carne Creek, the Wolgan River, Marangaroo and Bungleboori Creek headwaters. The surface sandstone rock could be cracked to a depth of 20 m over the entire mined area. See more at: <https://www.colongwilderness.org.au/stop-centennial-coal> Colong is seeking your submissions opposing approval by 26th May

LAND CLEARANCE

SMH notes that farmers are clearing land six times faster than detected by the NSW government, and most offsets "to compensate for vegetation destruction" merely preserve existing conservation areas, according to unpublished research by Philip Gibbons, biodiversity expert.

NUCLEAR AGAINST RENEWABLES

Mark Diesendorf, UNSW energy expert states that we should not believe the spurious claims of nuclear supporters who are constantly putting down renewables. Clean, safe renewable energy technologies have the potential to supply 100% of the world's electricity demand – but the first hurdle is to refute the deliberately misleading myths designed to promote the politically powerful but ultimately doomed nuclear industry. Large wind and solar farms can be planned and built in 2-3 years (as against 10-15 years for nuclear) and are ready now to replace fossil and nuclear electricity. Nuclear energy and renewable energy (RE) are the principal competitors for low-carbon electricity in many countries. As RE technologies have grown in volume, and become much cheaper, deniers of climate science have become deniers of RE. <http://www.echo.net.au/2016/04/100-renewables>

COAL TOP POLLUTER

Air quality across Australia has deteriorated to alarming levels with the coal industry the nation's worst polluter, new data has shown. The most concerning rise in air pollution is from [PM10](#), a coarse pollution particle about the width of a human hair. Nationally, total PM10 emissions have increased 69 % in one year, and 194 % in five years.

The figures come from the National Pollutant Inventory [\[NPI\]](#) 2014-15 report which collects information about toxic pollution. Environmental Justice Australia [\[EJA\]](#) researcher Dr James Whelan said the findings raise serious questions about the future of Australia's air quality and called for tougher federal government regulation, an urgent transition from coal to renewable energy, and a National Air Pollution Control Act. Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/air-pollution->

LESS SEA ICE IN THE ARCTIC

The Arctic Ocean had less sea ice this (northern) winter than any year since records began. The unprecedented low brings the prospect of an ice-free Arctic a step closer.

Summer ice has seen a series of record lows in recent years as the Arctic has warmed by almost 2°C, double the rate at mid-latitudes. Ice re-forms each winter and, until now, the average extent of winter ice has remained relatively constant, though the loss of permanent ice means it is thinner than before.

But last year's winter re-freeze of the waters of the Arctic Ocean was the lowest since satellite observations began in 1979. This is according to provisional data released by the [National Snow and Ice Data Center](#) at the University of Colorado. The sea ice cover of 14.5 million kms² in March, was the smallest ever recorded. <https://www.newscientist.com/>

THE KIMBERLEY REGION

The WA Government is proposing a marine park for the North Kimberley region of the Kimberley Coast, the heart of the world's most pristine tropical coastline. The Kimberley Coast is a refuge for sawfish, turtles, dugong, crocodiles and snubfin dolphins. [Please ask the WA Government to give North Kimberley the protection it deserves.](#)

Meetings of the Society are held at the [Oatley RSL & Community Club](#), 23 Letitia Oatley from 7.30 to 9.30pm, usually on the fourth Monday. Visitors and accompanied children are welcome at meetings and excursions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

[See OFF's whole year's program at: off.oatleypark.com/program]

May 19th (Thurs) OFF Dinner, Mortdale RSL 7-9pm. Please be prompt -serving at 7.15pm

May 23rd (Mon) regular meeting at 7.30pm with 1) Deb Andrew speaking on Regent Honeyeaters and other woodland birds; and 2) Tony Porritt speaking on Travels to [Geographical Corners](#) of the various states of arid inland Australia, including Cameron, Peoppel and Haddon.

May 29th (Sun) Field Day to Curra Moors A 10km walk through heathland to the coast, then following the cliffs for 2km. We should see whales and a reasonable flower display and plenty of birds. The walk is relatively level except for a small descent for the first 1km. Bring lunch and refreshments. We will meet at the cafe near the visitors centre at Audley at 9am. At Audley, we will amalgamate our group into a smaller number of cars as there is limited parking at the start of the walk. National Park entrance fees will apply. Contact details -Leader Graham Fry ☎ 9580 6621 and 0490 056 233.

June 27th (Mon) regular meeting at 7.30pm with "Man from Coxs River" -This film is a great conservation success story about the removal of brumbies from the World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park. It is a very interesting story combining the stunning images of the magnificent Blue Mountains and the history and nostalgia of the brumbies.

June 29th (Wed)* Field Day Exploring the edge of the CBD - Walk from Central to Circular Quay via the new raised walkway, down to Darling Harbour, and along the harbour edge via Barangaroo. A tour of the ABC has been booked for 10.30, with the money (\$8/p) to be collected at the May meeting. Anyone joining us, but not able to be at the May meeting please ring the Leader Sue de Beuzeville ☎ 80686149. * Do note the change of date; in the walks calendar it was listed as 1st July

July 25th (Mon) regular meeting at 7.30pm with Rob Brewster from [Rewilding Australia](#) speaking on Returning carnivorous marsupials to the landscape.

GEORGES RIVER KEEPERS: APRIL MEETING TALK

Fifty-eight members and guests attended the April meeting keen to hear all about the Georges River Keeper, Tony Wales, and the work undertaken by the Aboriginal Bushcare Unit and the Green Army. Unfortunately, Tony was unable to attend, but Svetlana Kotevski from GRCCC stood in and provided us with the background on this federally funded cooperative venture. She was joined by 5 members of the Aboriginal Bush Regeneration Team selected from applicants from all over NSW. These young men and women are working towards the attainment of qualifications in Conservation Land Management while they improve biodiversity in selected bushland reserves along the Georges River that have significant cultural history. They are also educated in traditional ecological knowledge and cultural learning provided to them by Local Aboriginal Land Council elders. One of the team said "Completing this traineeship has made my whole family proud because not only am I learning about my culture but I am also making a difference to the environment". And we hope to see this government initiative continue into the future.



Incidentally, the superlative Oatley Point was mentioned as a particularly sacred place and the Birthing Cave is a unique formation hidden from view ". [Report by Matt Allison]

FIELD DAY PICNIC AT CORDEAUX DAM ON 1ST MAY

Thirty-nine attended [the picnic event](#) opposing the environmentally damaging longwall coal mining projects in the Metropolitan Drinking Water catchments. Most attending were members of OFF, that sponsored the day, but there were also representatives from Georges River Environmental Alliance and National Parks Association, Macarthur.

The particular focus was on the proposal to extend the Dendrobium mining operations in the Cordeaux and Avon Dam catchments. This huge project was approved in principle in 2008, before there was adequate awareness of the environmental impacts of mining.

[WaterNSW](#), the government agency responsible for drinking water delivery, has now taken a strong stand, following the disclosed damage of 89 impacts on swamps and streams within this project area. It has announced that the further approval of the detailed plans for the next set of Longwall mines, presents an "unacceptable risk", to Sydney's drinking water. Yet the NSW government is on the verge of a further approval. Much more by Field Day Leader Sharyn Cullis at: <http://off.oatleypark.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Coalfields>

OFF PLANNING WORKSHOP ON 7TH MAY

Thirty-two members attended this workshop; there were ten apologies. Five key performance indicators were identified, and each reviewed by a separate group. Their conclusions will now be considered by the OFF Committee.

LIME KILN BAY WETLAND AWARENESS PROJECT

OFF is conducting this project to raise community awareness of the importance of the wetlands, to promote increased involvement and behavioural change, and to reduce detrimental environmental impacts on the catchment area. More information is on the OFF [web site](#).

Note also that Hurstville City Council encourages the public to lodge complaints on ☎9330 6222 about detrimental environmental impacts including run-off from building sites. All building approvals require effective erosion and sedimentation controls, and Council will treat seriously any breach of a development consent, issuing on-the-spot fines or prosecuting the offender.

MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE COMMUNITY LAND

OFF notes [HCC](#) has again been considering a proposal to reclassify part of MDR community land formerly occupied by the Oatley Bowling Club. Its [plan](#) in 2010 was to lease the land so as to provide specific community facilities. Now the focus seems to be on removing the restrictions under the Local Government Act 1993, alienating this significant public land and putting it up for sale. In view of the forthcoming amalgamation of Hurstville and Kogarah Councils it is important the community express its opposition to the scheme in the short and long term. One way of doing this is by joining others and adding your name on [Change.org](#).

FOR NOTING

Homegrown Power Plan a joint project between [GetUp!](#) and [Solar Citizens](#), as reported in *The Guardian*, showing how to [power with renewable energy](#)

Myles Dunphy Streamwatch, next meets at 9am on Tues 24th May [Details: Sharyn ☎9579 1262, Heather ☎0425 291 879].

Powerful Owl Project is co-managed by BirdLife Australia's Birds in Backyards program and the Threatened Bird Network. <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/powerful-owl-project>

