



OFF News

Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc.

Protecting the local environment since 1955

<http://off.oatleypark.com>

Issue 9/16

Sept/Oct 2016

LIME KILN BAY WETLAND PROJECT

This project was undertaken by OFF with a grant from the NSW Environment Minister's Conservation Fund. The wetland and surrounding bushland represent a significant community asset, but there are increasingly significant environmental impacts on the wetland from urban development (gross pollutants, sewage, sediment, weeds, etc.) causing deterioration in the natural qualities of the area.

The aim of the Project was to raise awareness in the local community of the wetland's presence, value and significance, increase community understanding and appreciation of the wetlands, increase community involvement in wetland monitoring and adjacent bush regeneration programs, and reduce pollutants deriving from the catchment (litter, sediment, etc.)

The grant amount was \$4550. and the Project was completed on 24th June. Much more at <http://off.oatleypark.com/>

WARRAGAMBA DAM

The Colong Foundation [CF] in its August bulletin notes that the NSW Government continues to see Warragamba Dam as unfinished business, and that the Dam wall should be raised.

CF notes that the result would be the inundation of over 3,000 hectares of World Heritage listed national park lands, wilderness and wild rivers. Lower reaches of protected wild rivers, including the Kowmung, Coxs, and Nattai Rivers, will be flooded.

CF comments that, "Temporary inundation caused by the proposal would scar wilderness areas, kill riverbank vegetation and deposit sediment. The affected parts of the southern Blue Mountains national parks, arguably the most protected parks in Australia, may have to be deregistered as national park, as they would be degraded were this scheme to proceed.



Temporary impoundment of floodwater would result in the 'bath-ring effect'—visual scarring of the landscape when natural areas are temporarily inundated. The NSW Government would like us to believe that the drowned World Heritage Area will not be degraded, but once native vegetation is inundated and smothered in sediment, it is replaced by an eroding mess of bare earth and weeds".

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is also opposed to the development. Tara Cameron noted, "We are very concerned that between Badgerys Creek airport and raising the Warragamba dam wall, the world heritage values of the Blue Mountains will be deemed at risk by UNESCO. Australia has an international obligation to protect these areas not destroy them. This is an environmental disaster" (*BM Gazette, 20th June*).

WHAT NEXT FOR OATLEY BOWLING CLUB SITE?

The Georges River Independent Hearing Assessment Panel has approved the subdivision and boundary adjustment of the site of the former Oatley Bowling Club, despite receiving 276 objections and four objecting petitions with 1275 signatures.

The [Leader](#) notes there are serious faults in the approval, and it lacks any detail of construction and operational works, with direct bearing on the potential environmental impact! [Notes from Friends of Oatley Inc.](#)

BIODIVERSITY UNDER THREAT

The NSW Government has drafted legislation that will weaken protection for biodiversity in our state. The titles of the legislation – *Biodiversity Conservation Bill* and *Local Land Services Amendment Bill* are misleading and obscure their true purpose.

The bills will actually allow increased damage to the natural environment through less-regulated land-clearing. The bills will remove a legal requirement that land clearing should "maintain or improve" biodiversity and will facilitate widespread destruction of native vegetation in both country and urban areas. Nature will pay the bill for this ill-conceived legislation.

<http://off.oatleypark.com/?cat=8>

REGENT HONEYEATER ON THE BRINK

OFF volunteers have been helping ANU PhD candidate Ross Crates with his research into the ecology of the Regent Honeyeater, one of our most endangered birds.

There may be as few as 600 of them remaining in the wild. Ross will use artificial nests (with false eggs) in Capertee National Park to ascertain which birds and mammals threaten the Regent Honeyeater. Ross will be a speaker at one of OFF's meetings next year.

<http://off.oatleypark.com>

RECYCLING PLASTICS

You can recycle soft plastics - those not accepted in Council recycling bins – at the following local supermarkets (**look for the Redcycle bin**): Coles in Mulga Road, Oatley, Coles, Hurstville Station, Woolworths Cross Street, Hurstville

Acceptable plastics include: bread bags, biscuit packets, frozen food bags, rice and pasta bags, confectionery packets, cereal box liners, newspaper wrap, plastic shopping bags. For a complete list of recyclable soft plastics, see <http://redcycle.net.au/redcycle/>

AUSSIE BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Join in the Aussie Backyard Bird Count in Bird Week on 17-23 October. People all over Australia will be counting the birds and contributing to a vital pool of information that will help us see how Australian birds are faring.

All you need is 20 minutes, your backyard or other favourite outdoor space, and some keen eyesight. You can complete as many counts as you like over the week – so get your friends and family together, head into the great outdoors and start counting! Last year the event counted 800,000 birds. There is an app to help you that will be free to download from the app stores on 1 October. This year there will also be lesson plans for primary schools so whole classrooms can get involved. Keep an eye on the website to find out when they will be released. More information: www.aussiebirdcount.org.au

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]

Sept 24-26th Weekend Field Trip Exploring Capertee NP. We have booked both the cosy homestead and cottage for the weekend to use as a base while we explore the park and enjoy its abundant wildlife. Bookings have closed for this week-end trip but we may visit Capertee NP again next year, so keep it in mind for Spring 2017.

Sept 26th (Mon) Meeting 7.30pm with Julian Sheen speaking on Travels through Central Asia

Oct 24th Monday Meeting - 7.30pm with Laurie Derwent speaking on "Oysters - canaries of the estuary"

Oct 30th Sunday - Field day Appreciate the beautiful Minnamurra Falls and coastal rainforest. Leader: Julian Sheen

Nov 28th Monday Meeting & Social Supper - 7.30pm with Gary Schoer speaking on "An expedition to Spitzbergen"

Nov 30th Wednesday - Field day Cruise along the scenic Port Hacking River Leader: Graham Fry

Dec 5th Christmas picnic in Oatley Park

Feb 6th 7.30pm AGM followed by member photos and supper

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS TOUR: 24TH AUG

Amanda Gibson's tour of the Gardens attracted 19 participants on a lovely sunny morning. She guided them to sites and plants that reflected the Gardens' history and diverse flora.

In the cool green fernery, we saw a wall of convict-hewn sandstone blocks from Governor Darling's bathhouse. They bore the convicts' identifying "banker's marks" that allowed them to be paid for their work. Nearby is the oldest bridge in Australia – a sandstone arch that was built in 1816 for Mrs Macquarie.

We had privileged access to the steamy [Latitude 23 glasshouse](#) overflowing with luxuriant tropical vegetation and colourful orchids. Beside the Macquarie Wall, the Spring Walk was a mass of red, white and cream tulips, and ornamental fruit trees were beginning to blossom. Nearby two Australian trees of the Proteaceae family were also flowering – a macadamia and a Queensland Tree Waratah (*Alloxylon flammeum*).

Cycads, conifers, and palms were admired for their textured trunks and striking leaf shapes. Amanda pointed out a grove of conifers belonging to the Araucariaceae - an example of Gondwanan flora – and led us to a thriving Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*). This member of the family was only discovered in 1994, but fossils of the same genus, unearthed in Victoria in the 1960s, were dated at 115 million years old so the Wollemi Pine can justifiably be called a living fossil.

In its 200th anniversary year, some of the Gardens' oldest trees were singled out - a Red Cedar sprouting characteristic fresh red leaves, a 40 m Kauri (*Agathis robusta*) planted in 1853, and an aged Queensland Bottle Tree whose sagging branches have been propped up. A Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) that pre-dated European settlement and died in 2009 has been carved by local Indigenous artists and named Yurabirong – "people of this place".

After discovering many unfamiliar features of the Gardens and learning much about its heritage, some participants stayed to have lunch at the Gardens café and some went on to visit the [Sweet Addiction](#) exhibition in the new Calyx glasshouse.

FLORA AND FAUNA OF NORTHERN ALASKA

Our 55 members and guests at Rodger Robertson's presentation in July were a testament to the success of the change of venue to the cosy Oatley RSL Club. The chilly outside temperature did manage to set the mood for Rodger's travel tale of Northern Alaska following the famed Trans Alaskan Pipeline along the frozen highway less travelled. This road is used almost exclusively by truck drivers supplying the mining camps of this isolated and eternally frigid Arctic region (made famous by the TV series: "Ice Road Truckers"). The highway has been elevated above the tundra floor to avoid the permafrost

that can thaw in summer, and which history has proved to be disastrous for overland travel.

This band of travellers managed to tick off many of the iconic Yukon fauna with moose, caribou and Arctic foxes dominating and fleeting glimpses of Lynx, ptarmigan and snow-shoe rabbits delighting pundits, and flora featuring spruce trees in the south and lichens – the preferred food of tundra grazers like the caribou - dominating further northward.

Rodger had researched the controversial oil pipeline extensively, and passed on many interesting facts about its construction, maintenance and its future as the oil reserves diminish. The one burning issue of which conservationists were initially fearful was the perceived interruption of the caribou migration because of the pipeline. However, it seems the Caribou simply ignored the structure and carried on regardless. [Noted by Matt Allison]

HAVE A SAY ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) is encouraging community groups and individuals to participate in drafting District Plans. These will outline the priorities for each of the six districts across Greater Sydney, be used for the State Government's coordination of service and infrastructure, and the Local Government's guide in the preparation of new Local Environment Plans for private development. Georges River Council area is part of the South District, and there are a number of local items meriting GSC attention. <http://www.greater.sydney/>

FOR NOTING

Advance notice –Kosciuszko NP, Jan 2017. This is not part of the formal OFF program of activities but for many years we have enjoyed a week in the High Country and are thinking of booking Pygmy Possum Lodge at Charlotte's Pass again, from 8th January. Contact Graham Fry fyg@zipworld.com.au or ☎9580 6621 if interested.

Homegrown Power Plan is 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 27th Sept [Details: Sharyn ☎9579 1262, Heather ☎0425 291 879].

Nature Conservation Council NSW with links to 150 community organisations is committed to protecting and restoring the unique natural environment of NSW. <http://www.nature.org.au/about/>

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>



"Once again, there is no conclusive evidence of climate change. From Fairbanks, Alaska, this is Joe Matthews reporting."