



### SYDNEY'S LAST KOALAS

Sydney's last remaining healthy koala colony is facing a threat in the south-western suburbs as more than 30,000 new homes and major highway upgrades are proposed for nearby areas.

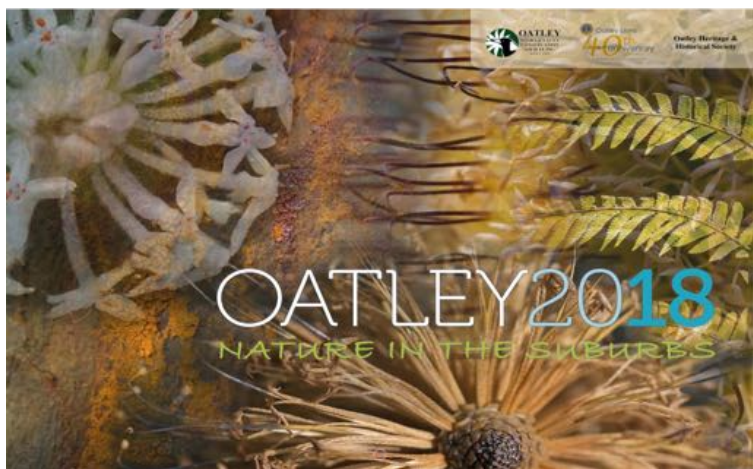
The Total Environment Centre has launched a campaign to permanently protect these koalas. The TEC is asking for donations to bring the problem to public attention and ensure politicians and developers know about the importance of koala protection. Contact : [www.tec.org.au/contact](http://www.tec.org.au/contact).



### POPULATION DEBATE

Businessman Dick Smith has reignited the simmering debate on population growth (S.M.H. Oct 7-8) by questioning the mentality of "perpetual growth" and calling for limits on the number that Australia can cope with. And it seems that there is general agreement, with 66.4% of voters surveyed saying that Sydney is full. This is reflected in the opposition to the NSW Government's plan to build hundreds of thousands of new apartments in Sydney's suburbs.

OFF has long taken an interest in this debate. In OFF News (Sept 1995) former NSW Premier Bob Carr is quoted as saying "There is a limit on the population growth. Sydney is simply too large...and is up against its natural barriers." In OFF News (May 2002) it is noted that "population policy is ultimately an environmental matter...and if we continue down the path of growth with all the water pollution, air pollution, traffic congestion and social dislocation, we will inherit the same disastrous situation that we see in other cities in the world."



The **Oatley 2018 Nature in the Suburbs Calendar** will go on sale at the Oatley Lions Spring Festival on Saturday, 21 October. All proceeds go to local community organisations - Oatley Lions, Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society and Oatley Heritage and Historical Society.

**Price \$10:00 (OFFCS Members \$8:00)**

At the Festival stall we will be offering **new** memberships and a 2018 calendar for \$30.00, a saving of \$5.00. Let your friends and neighbours know about this special offer.

### WARRAGAMBA WOES

The NSW Government is proposing to raise the height of Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres as a flood mitigation measure. This will have serious environmental consequences as wild rivers in the Blue Mountains World Heritage area will be flooded, submerged vegetation will die and dead trees will leave a scar on the landscape. Even the view from Echo Point Katoomba will be affected.

This measure estimated to cost \$700 million will not entirely prevent floods below the dam wall. A better solution is to lower the level of the dam and to manage the risks by reducing urban sprawl downstream. For more information, contact The Colong Foundation, Ph 9261 2400.

### VALE DR PETER AIREY AND MRS PAT DONNELLY



We extend sympathy to the families of two long-time members who died recently - Dr Peter Airey and Mrs Pat Donnelly. Peter and his wife Margret were presented with a Certificate of Recognition at the OFF AGM in February this year, for their 40 years of membership.

Pat was a keen walker and a member of the Hospitality and Welcome Team from 2004-2011; she resigned in 2013 because of ill-health.

### RESEARCH GRANTS AWARDED

At the OFF Planning Workshop held in 2016 a recommendation was made that rather than OFF donating money each year to other conservation organisations we should instead donate directly to researchers. As a consequence of that recommendation the first research grants have recently been awarded. A total of nine applications were received from students at three universities. The OFF Research Committee analysed the applications and after much deliberation agreed to fund two applicants:

- Ross Crates, Australian National University - Enhancing the nesting success of wild Regent Honeyeaters: an experimental approach - \$3000
- Reannan Honey, University of Technology, Sydney - Habitat restoration for hollow dependant fauna - \$2000

We think the research that these two recipients are undertaking is consistent with the aims of OFF and we are proud to be able to assist with their projects. We will be calling for new applications in 2018 using the funds that our members have donated to OFF this year. A requirement for winning these awards is that the recipient is expected to give a presentation on their research at a future OFF meeting.

Graham Fry

## Coming OFF Events

### 23 October - Monday Meeting at 7:30pm - Jim Vickery - Murray Darling: Getting on with the Plan

Farmers want more of it; the environment needs more of it; townships must have it; but who suffers if the water is toxic. The Murray Darling Basin Authority is wrestling with these demands in a historically badly managed river basin. Jim Vickery will give some insights into how these demands are being met under the plan enacted in 2012.

### 26 November - Sunday Field Trip Rivercat to Parramatta, explore historic buildings and parks. Leader: Vicki Bolling and Graham Lalchere. Final details at next meeting and in November's newsletter.


### 4 December - Monday from 5:30pm - OFF Picnic in Oatley Park - further details in next newsletter

### Sunday 7 January to Sunday 14 – Friends of OFF week at Pygmy Possum Lodge, Charlotte Pass in the Snowy Mountains.


If you are interested in staying at the lodge for all or some of that period, please contact Graham Fry on fry45@gmail.com


Meetings of the Society are held at the Oatley RSL and Community Club, 23 Letitia Street, Oatley from 7:30 - 9:30pm usually on the fourth Monday.

## BRIEFLY SPEAKING .....


 The annual Aussie Backyard Bird Count organised by Birdlife Australia runs from 23-29 October 2017. You can be part of a nationwide survey of birds by registering on-line and downloading the App. It takes just 20 mins each day to record the species and number of birds visiting your garden using the app. More details at <https://aussiebirdcount.org.au>.

There will also be a special bird counting event in Myles Dunphy Reserve on Sunday 29 October meeting at the entrance off Mulga Road at 8:00am. Let Geoff Francis know if you plan to attend (0437 407 332).

 Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society will hold its Annual General Meeting on Monday, 5 February at 7:30pm. All members are invited to attend. The President and Secretary will present their annual reports and a new committee will be elected. The Society is always looking for fresh ideas and opinions so why not consider nominating for one of the positions on the Committee? Supper will be served after the meeting and members' are invited to share any interesting or fun digital photos from the past year.

 The theme of the Society's stall at the Oatley Lions Spring Festival on Saturday 21 October will be our Community Tree Watch project. There will also be plants for sale, card sales and the launch of the Oatley 2018 Calendar.

Melissa Derwent will be running a children's nature craft table, making head-bands and other fun items out of natural materials (feathers, colourful leaves, seed-pods etc.). Help out by collecting any interesting or colourful natural materials and bring them along for Melissa to use on the day.

 The Society's Facebook page - A Fresh Start - will be closing down soon as it has served its purpose of stimulating discussion about the recent Georges River Council elections and alerting local residents to the lack of adequate information made available by most candidates. It was particularly disappointing that so few candidates responded to OFF's letter seeking a commitment to ethical practices in local government and to our questionnaire about their views on local environmental issues such as the Oatley Bowling Club development.

## ANNE MCLEOD'S TALK ON MARIE BYLES

At our September meeting we heard a very interesting presentation from Anne McLeod on the life of Marie Byles (1900-1979), richly illustrated by Marie's own photographs.

Anne has recently published a biography of Marie's life and achievements. Marie was the first woman solicitor in N.S.W., a fierce feminist activist in divorce law reform as well as a writer, explorer, mountaineer, passionate bushwalker and an active Buddhist. She was a zealous advocate for the wilderness and its conservation and was the driving force behind the establishment of the Bouddi National Park.

Anne's book may be purchased through her website. [www.annemcleod.com.au](http://www.annemcleod.com.au)

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

This year marks the 50 year anniversary of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The September edition of the Colong Foundation Bulletin published two contrasting articles about the state of the NPWS.

The CEO of the Office of Environment and Heritage is upbeat, opening with motherhood statements about the achievements of the NPWS before reporting on the 2016 review of the organisation – *"The changes we're making aren't about saving money - they're about doing the most we can, in the most effective way with out existing staff budget"*. He argues that the savings made by reducing the number of management positions will enable more to be spent on frontline services.

Penny Sharpe, Shadow Minister for the Environment has a very different view calling the cut-backs *"the single biggest attack on the NPWS since it was established in 1967"*. Ms Sharpe's analysis concludes that the Government will slash \$121 million from the NPWS budget over just a two-year period. Apparently 246 full-time positions have been axed and 20% of national parks ranger positions have been erased. This will *"mean fewer conservation programs, reduced maintenance of facilities and fire hazard reduction, less work on dealing with pests and weeds, and an emerging problem of wild dogs and deer"*.

Compounding the cuts Ms Sharpe points out that the promised plan to establish new national parks is 3 years overdue and the Government itself threatens the very existence of our parks with a proposal to put the F6 through a corner of the Royal National Park and the Nationals' candidate for Murray, Austin Evans, vowing to introduce a private member's bill relegating the status of the Murray Valley National Park back to state forest, just 7 years after it was created, so loggers can once again have access to its timber. (Evans was elected last weekend narrowly beating the candidate from the Shooters and Fishers party and the NSW Government, after a strong community backlash, has now stated that the F6 will not run through the RNP)

So while we should be celebrating the anniversary, unfortunately there are good reasons to fear for the future of the NPWS and our parks.

Shaun Keays-Byrne

