



#TIME2CHOOSE MASSIVE STATEWIDE RALLY

Time2Choose is holding a demonstration in support of clean air, water and energy, and against new coal mines and CSG gas fields. It will be held on **24 March, 2018** from 12.00 pm to 2.00 pm. Meeting point at Hyde Park North. There will be representatives from right across NSW. The CBD will be packed with people demanding a different future.

For more details go to: www.lockthegate.org.au/time2choose

FEBRUARY MEETING UPDATE

We had a record number of attendees with 75 members and guests at our first general meeting which featured speaker **James Baxter-Gilbert**. His enthusiastic talk on the **Eastern Water Dragon** and their adaptability to a changing urban environment was fascinating. An interesting aspect of the presentation was the methodology applied by James and the rigorous testing used in his research. He captivated the audience with his story on the elusive nature of the dragon – taking him 6 months to capture candidates. It is anticipated that his impressive research will be awarded a PhD in Science.

James put the offspring of the originally captured and released lizards through all sorts of rigorous experiments to test nature over nurture. The research looked at whether genetic difference was the reason the dragons have survived and thrived in a man-made world or if a steep curve of learned behaviour was the key. In conclusion James believes it is a combination of both with final results ready in another month or so.

After such gruelling research and experimentation, the expectation of a PhD is particularly satisfying. A touching end to the presentation was to see James' dad throw his arm around his son in a show of admiration and pride.

OFF CELEBRATION DINNER

The annual OFF Celebration Dinner will be held on **Thursday 28 June, 2018** at OAT MILL, Oatley RSL from 6.30 pm (commencing 7.00 pm). The cost is \$38 per person. Dinner includes bread roll, entree, main, and cupcakes. Special dietary requirements available on request. Guests are to purchase drinks at the bar. OFF will hold a raffle on the night. Donations most welcome. For further information please contact Vicki Bolling 9580 3107 or Sue Howard 9579 1718. **Note**** Payment due by Monday, 28 May 2018 (meeting night).

EXCURSION REPORT: VICTORIA BARRACKS

Thirteen OFF members plus friends were part of a tour through Victoria Barracks on 1 March, 2018. Victoria Barracks is located in Paddington, between Oxford Street and Moore Park Road. It is one of the best-known examples of military architecture in Australia.



Once inside our group was greeted by Sergeant Ryan and members of the Corps of Guides. We were divided into four groups and headed off to explore the many historic sites. We learned that Victoria Barracks is a major historic site built in the 1840's, and still an active military base where the headquarters of Australia's Land Army are based. We all admired the fine Georgian architecture of the original barracks buildings including soldiers', NCOs' and officers' accommodations. We enjoyed hearing stories of the soldiers of the past and present from our excellent guides, all retired soldiers.

After coffee we visited the museum where Sergeant Ryan gave us an excellent account of life in the NSW colonial army, the battle of Vinegar Hill, the Sudan expedition and other exploits from Victorian times. He proved an informative guide. Following what was a demanding but highly worthwhile four-hour tour most of us retired to the Captain Cook Hotel for a good lunch, before heading home. More information and photos at:

<http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=7128>

Julian Sheen

CLEANUP AUSTRALIA DAY

Another successful clean-up was held on Sunday 4 March, 2018 along the shores of Lime Kiln Bay. 27 people, including six guides and their leaders, gave up some of their time to scour the mangrove edges for rubbish. A total of 22 bags of rubbish were collected, plus car tyres, pipe, styrofoam and bits of wood. More information and photos at: <http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=7099>.



Alan Fairley and guides.

OATLEY IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to those OFF members who were successful in getting an article on the development of Myles Dunphy Reserve in the *Sydney Morning Herald* titled "Plans to rezone land for seniors housing labelled environmental threat and 'a travesty'" - 18 February 2018. The article strongly argued for the retention of the reserve for passive recreation. To view full article visit: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/plans-to-rezone-land-for-seniors-housing-labelled-environmental-threat-and-a-travesty-20180217-p4z0oc.html>

MORE TO CONSIDER WHEN FEEDING BIRDS

Georges River Council will be erecting signs regarding problems associated with feeding birds in Evatt Park, Lugarno at Webb's Dam. The sign is based on the following wording:

"To prevent diseases and bird deaths, it is important that the birds feed from the natural environment. To keep the birds healthy, please refrain from feeding them however enjoy watching them in their natural setting. Feeding of the birds by visitors to the park increases their population to unnaturally high levels. Uneaten bread and an increase in bird droppings contribute to the high nutrient and bacteria levels in the dam. High nutrient levels in the dam increases the chances of avian botulism during the summer months which may result in the death of birds."

In Graham Fry's article in the Feb/Mar 2018 issue of *OFF News* he wrote that feeding birds "was a way of compensating for the destruction that humans have inflicted on the environment". I too have that urge when I feed a local brushtail possum that has taken up residence in our old garage while all the urban gardens around us change to concrete and tiles. However, to ensure everyone is aware of the down side to feeding the fauna, I would further add to Graham's story the problems associated with feeding many birds in public places such as pigeons, ibis, feral and native ducks.

Unfortunately, many people are simply unaware of the mess, disease and loss of diversity in our environment, and problems associated with feeding birds. If feeding birds at home, I encourage the use calcium powder on meat and not to feed all the time, so that the birds do not become reliant on humans for food. Besides supplying clean water, also have the right vegetation and vegetation structure on your property or balcony to allow the birds to forage for themselves.

Heather Stolle

21 March - FIELD DAY Walk from Edgecliff to Circular Quay via Royal Botanic Gardens.

An easy walk exploring the city's eastern fringe. Starting from Edgecliff and then proceeding through Rushcutters Bay, Potts Point, and Woolloomooloo including the Finger Wharf, Royal Botanic Gardens and finishing at Circular Quay. The walk is 5km in length and should take about 3-4 hours. We are catching the 9:05 am train from Oatley, 9:07 Mortdale, third carriage from the front and getting off at Edgecliff. Bring any refreshments you may need although there will be opportunities to purchase food and drinks on the way. Leader Keith McRorie – 0499 186 651.

26 March – (Monday Meeting) Emeritus Professor of Anthropology Richard Wright, Examines the Australian Climate and Environment of 10,000 Years Ago.

In the 1970s and 1980s Em. Prof. Richard Wright ran excavations on the edges of swamps in Victoria and NSW. These excavations yielded insights into ancient archaeology, plants and mammals. He will illustrate the stratification and contents of these excavations, and their specific bearing on prehistoric climatic and environmental change.

27-29 April – Trip to Capertee Valley.

OFF have booked the homestead and cottage in the Capertee Valley National Park for the weekend. As well as exploring the park we will be carrying out some conservation work including weeding and maintenance of trees planted last year and hopefully doing some additional planting. As many people know, this park is a very important location for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater. They frequently nest along the river and these trees will eventually provide additional food and nesting sites. At this time of the year the birds are not nesting and so it is unlikely they will be present but you never know! If you are interested in coming for the weekend and staying in the homestead or cottage, contact **Graham Fry at fryg45@gmail.com or on 9580 6621.**

Meetings of the Society are held at the Oatley RSL Club, 23 Letitia St, Oatley (lower level sports room) from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month. Visitors and accompanied children are welcome at meetings and field days.

Note ** The RSL Club management has requested that all meeting attendees be RSL Club members, so please join if you are not already a member. Fees are \$6 per year or \$12 for 3 years. Don't forget to ask for your parking sticker which provides you access to the RSL car park. Of course you can be signed in by a RSL member if you are not a member. To enter the club, you should do either of these things.

BRIEFLY SPEAKING

EARTH HOUR will be held on **Saturday, 24 March 2018**, between 8.30 pm and 9.30 pm.

OATLEY PARK BUSHCARE group is on the second Saturday of each month starting at 12.00 pm. Meet up at the carpark at the top entrance gate off Oatley Park Avenue. Although this group is overseen by council, it is in essence an OFF initiative and so it is important that it is supported by members so we can be seen to be 'putting our money where our mouth is'.

PHOTOS NEEDED

Do you have any 35mm slide photos of OFF activities from the 1980s, 1970s or even earlier? The Society would like to borrow them so we can make digital copies as part of our historical records. We would need them to be on loan for a few weeks. If you can help, see Alan Fairley at one of OFF's meetings.

AUTUMN BIRD WATCHING

Autumn is a great time for observing nature. Most birds have finished breeding and so there are more of them than at any other time of the year. More significantly, there is a lot of migration occurring at this time. The summer migrants are leaving for the tropics and Asia - remember the Koels when they arrived in spring! While birds from Tasmania and Victoria are heading for the warmer climates of NSW and Queensland.

Often in March and April you may be fortunate to have a Rufous Fantail visit your garden to feed on the insects it needs for energy, to make the trip to Queensland. They are very similar to the more familiar Grey Fantail but are brown and reddish, and generally feed close to the ground. They normally inhabit rainforests or wet gullies, but during migration will use open habitats.



It is thought many smaller birds migrate at night but the Yellow-faced Honeyeater is one exception and during April large flocks will often be seen flying through our area. A good spot to see them is Websters Lookout, Oatley Park as they often fly across the Georges River, and briefly land in the trees near the lookout. A good time to spot them is mid-morning around 9.00 am to 10.00 am. Another obvious indication of their presence is their chip-chip contact call.

Now is also the time that Powerful Owls are getting ready to mate and breed. They often call at this time of the year proclaiming their territory or trying to attract a mate, generally in the early evening or pre-dawn. For more information on birds visit the Birdlife Australia website:

<http://www.birdlife.org.au/all-about-birds/birds-in-backyards>

We are very lucky to live in an area where we can easily observe nature - enjoy autumn.

Graham Fry