



POLLUTED WATER FROM OLD MINE ENTERS SYDNEY'S WATER CATCHMENT



The ABC News on Sunday 20 August reported the alarming research findings of Dr Ian Wright, one of Australia's leading water scientists. Dr Wright and his team from the University of Western Sydney have been regularly testing water flowing from the derelict Berrima Colliery into the Wingecarribee River. The river forms part of Sydney's water catchment feeding into dams that provide our drinking water.

Dr Wright has been studying water pollution associated with coal mines for nearly 20 years. He told the ABC that the contamination levels were the worst he had ever encountered with heavy metals in the Wingecarribee River far exceeding safe environmental levels. Levels of Zinc were more than 120 times the baseline level.

Many Society members will already know of Dr Wright's research findings following his talk back in November 2015. You can find a summary of his presentation on the OFF website. Following the talk Dr Wright was presented with one of the last of the Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society peaked caps and it is with some pride that we can report Dr Wright was wearing his OFF cap when being filmed by the ABC!

THIRTY TREES TO BE REMOVED IN OATLEY DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

A development proposal at 23 Bay Road Oatley has come to the Society's attention that will mean the removal of at least 30 trees, mainly large, significant Blackbutts and the excavation of magnificent sandstone outcrops. The proposal is to demolish the existing dwelling and construct two huge freestanding houses taking up most of the site. The Development applications can be followed on the Council website using the following DA application numbers: DA2017/0197 & DA2017/0198

You can find the full text of a neighbour's submission opposing the extent of the development on the Society's website off.oatleypark.com but this extract sums up their cogent argument.

DA2017/0197 and DA2017/0198 are designed to exploit the environment for material gain. They totally undermine the Council's own LEP (Foreshore Scenic Protection Area) and the announced Tree Canopy Enhancement Program. Many residential developments have taken place in Bay Road Oatley over the last 20 years. About ten have been knock-down rebuilds. None have come even close to 5% of the destruction to the natural environment that this development demands. When we need to protect the environment more than at any other time in the history of mankind this development proposal is vastly out of touch with community expectations.

There are also links to the Arborist's reports on the website. OFFCS members have been asked to make submissions opposing this proposed environmental vandalism by 20 September.

BUSHCARE WORKING BEE AT WATTAMOLLA BEACH IN THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

On 23 August members of the Society joined forces with Georges River Bushcare Volunteers for a working bee targeting 'Mother of Millions', a highly invasive weed that had a firm hold on the rock shelf around the beach carpark. Patsy Nagle from National Parks supervised our work and between the 15 volunteers we filled 8 large Sulo bins. Not a bad effort for a couple of hours work!

The weather could not have been better and after the morning's work we had a delightful picnic under an old fig-tree. After lunch a few went walking while one intrepid soul had a dip in the lagoon.

Patsy Nagle told us that 40 acres of ocean frontage at Wattamolla was privately owned by Mr J Coote of Angus and Coote fame, until he presented the land to the National Park Trust in 1933.



RAFTING THE FRANKLIN RIVER - MEETING REPORT

Our August meeting brought 53 members and guests out to the Oatley RSL for the virtual ride of their lives. Monica and Phillip Moore had rafted down Tasmania's iconic Franklin River with their son, daughter and friend back in January, 2015. They used a commercial adventure company, of which there are a few, and spent 11 days in near perfect conditions immersing themselves in a pristine environment not many Australians will ever manage to experience. An extreme adventure such as this is, by virtue of its isolated nature, challenging and danger is a constant companion but the experience of the professional crew allays most fears held by the paying guest. Any rainfall in the catchment can raise the river level in minutes and escape from the water may be limited in the gorge-like surrounds so vigilance is a constant companion. There are climbs that can be enjoyed along the way with the quartz covered Frenchmans Cap featuring and the distant views must contrast heavily with the steep cliffs and roar back at the river.

To ensure the wilderness experience continues in a pristine environment everything that goes in must come back out. So, there are certain quirky privations - like pooing in a zip-lock bag - that may have helped convince some in the audience to reconsider their next travel destination.

Our society always appreciates the efforts speakers make to attend our meetings and the sharing of their experiences with us all in the audience. Our thanker this month was Graham Fry who, back in 1983, had joined the Wilderness Society's camp in Strachan training in non-violent protest action used in the campaign opposing the damming of the Franklin River. He along with thousands of others at the time was responsible for the saving of this icon as the new Hawke Government placed an immediate ban on its construction.

Coming OFF Events in September/October

25 September - Monday Meeting at 7:30pm - Anne McLeod, Author - THE SUMMIT OF HER AMBITION The Spirited Life of Marie Byles


Marie Byles - first woman lawyer of NSW, feminist activist with Jesse Street, environmentalist, mountaineer, early Western Buddhist. Mary Byles' life story has powerful narratives about human rights, conservation, ecology, feminism and spirituality. Anne McLeod's presentation will be illustrated by Marie's own photographs of her adventurous life and travels around the world. This presentation promises to be one of the highlights of the OFFCS calendar. Copies of Anne's book will be on sale at the meeting.


Tuesday 24 - Thursday 26 October - South Coast Walks Centred on Kioloa


We have made a reservation at the Kioloa Coastal Campus of the Australian National University for this period. The accommodation consists of a number of buildings each with 2 to 3 bedrooms and a common bathroom and kitchen. The facility is close to the beach. We will use it as a base to explore and take in some bush walks in the surrounding areas. The cost is \$35 per person per day. If you are interested please contact Graham Fry on fry45@gmail.com before the 26th September 2017 to reserve a space, note Graham am overseas from 8th Sept to 24th Sept.


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


 Mark Coure, Member for Oatley, is campaigning to have the NSW State government introduce legislation banning single-use plastic bags. If you want to show your support for his campaign you can do so through his website. www.markcoure.com.au/refuse-and-reuse

 Members of OFF will again spend a week at Pygmy Possum Lodge at Charlottes Pass in the Snowy Mountains in January 2018. The lodge has been booked for the period from Sunday 7th January to Sunday 14th January. If you are interested in staying at the lodge for all or some of that time, please contact Graham Fry on fry45@gmail.com the lodge is already 25% full and if we delay we may miss out.

 The Society's Photo Competition closed on 1 September. There were close to 60 entries and the final selection has been made to be included in the Oatley 2018 - Nature in the Suburbs Calendar to be launched at the Oatley Lions Spring Festival on 21 October. Copies will also be sold through several retail outlets in Oatley.

 Pleasing to see David Coleman, Member for Banks standing up in Federal Parliament and putting the case for Myles Dunphy Reserve to be preserved as public space. Perhaps not so pleasing is the number of the 'old guard' from both sides of politics who have found their way back onto council. Thankfully there are some new faces and hopefully their influence might allow a Fresh Start for Georges River Council!

 **Australasian Bird Fair and Wildlife Expo Friday, 3 November - Sunday 5 November 2017 at Newington Armory, Sydney Olympic Park.** Birding and conservation, art exhibits and sales, optical and photographic equipment, presentations, tours and activities for children. See more details at birdfair.com.au

 The Society will be running its usual stall at the Oatley Lions Spring Festival on Saturday, 21 October at Oatley Memorial Park. This year our focus will be OFF's Community Tree Watch project - particularly apt given the report of the proposed tree removal in Bay Rd. (see front page). Come along to help or just to say 'hello'. Melissa Derwent plans to run a nature craft table where children can make crowns out of leaves, feathers, petals or decorate pebbles. We will also be selling the Oatley 2018 - Nature in the Suburbs Calendar at a discount for OFFCS members.



CURRICULUM FROM 1952 REMARKABLY RELEVANT TODAY

The following statement appeared on page 375 in the NSW Department of Education Curriculum for Primary Schools published 1952. It was in the Natural Science section headed Sixth Grade and seems remarkably relevant to today.

Purposes of National Reserves *"Children should be taught to appreciate the value of National Reserves for the preservation of natural features, including flora and fauna and for the provision of facilities for popular enjoyment and open-air recreation for the people. The responsibility for maintaining such reserves so that they will continue to fulfil their functions should be stressed.*

Since the two objectives are not entirely compatible with each other children should be impressed with the desirability of ensuring that certain reserves should remain inviolate in their natural condition. In such areas there will be no picnic or open-playing spaces and a minimum means of ingress so that they all remain as a lasting reminder of the beauty and interest of the Australian bushland".



'AGGRESSIVE' MINING CAUSING SEVERE IMPACT ON SYDNEY WATER CATCHMENTS

Not only is our drinking water under threat of pollution from coal mines (see front page) there is apparently evidence in NSW Department of Planning reports that the Dendrobium long-wall coal mine located underneath the water catchment area to the West of Wollongong has caused seam-to-surface cracks resulting in rain water that should be feeding into our dams seeping into the voids created by the mining. The reports also disclose evidence of valley bulging around our dams creating leakage pathways in the surrounding rock, resulting in additional losses to our valuable drinking water supplies.

Lock the Gate Alliance has called for a moratorium on any further mining in the area and the NSW Premier has said the Government would look into the report's findings. You can find the full news report on this continuing threat to our water catchments at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-13/dendrobium->