



# O.F.F. NEWS



Published by  
**OATLEY FLORA & FAUNA  
CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.**

Issue: 2010/5

Print Post App. No. PP 255003/03239

Since 1955

Society's Website: <http://off.oatleypark.com>

May/June 2010

## RAINFORESTS

Rainforests protect unique plants and animals, fragile rainforest soils and the equality of water draining from the catchment. To increase public awareness and interest in the rainforests of New South Wales, Information Centres are located around the State. To botanists, intact rainforests provide important clues to the evolution of the Australian flora. Rainforests largely escaped the fluctuating conditions that changed the face of the rest of Australia's vegetation by surviving in moister sheltered locations along the Great Dividing Range. As a result, the remnant rainforests provided long-term stability, and as some have existed unchanged for so many years, they support many unusual animals, including the gastric-brooding frog, tree kangaroos, the primitive musky rat-kangaroo, and the chameleon gecko. Until the 1980s, it was thought that our rainforests originated overseas and invaded this continent across ancient land bridges. We now know that they once covered large areas of Australia and 'parented' the gum trees, wattles, waratahs and all the other plants long regarded as the typical Australian vegetation. <http://www.rbgsvd.nsw.gov.au/>

## KIMBERLEY: HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

The Wilderness Society notes that the Australian Heritage Council recently released a favourable preliminary assessment for a National Heritage listing for West Kimberley, site, a thousand million years ago; of major geological significance for the land that is now Australia. <http://www.wilderness.org.au/>

## FERAL DEER

The Invasive Species Council (ISC) lists Deer as a serious emerging pest problem, causing damage to both the natural environment and agriculture. Numbers are expanding and invading new areas, many, reportedly, due to deliberate introduction by recreational hunters. NSW has listed them as threatening, but they are still protected. ISC calls on NSW to fall into line with other States and declare feral deer as pests. <http://www.invasives.org.au/>

## LATEST ON RIVER RED GUMS

NSW Environment Minister Frank Sartor has introduced legislation in parliament to protect some areas of River Red Gum Forests, but leaving half of the highest conservation forests at Millewa open to destructive logging for five more years. The Wilderness Society and other groups are striving for get a much better outcome for the forests before this bill becomes law. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/>

## OATLEY BOWLING CLUB SITE

In the face of the continuing threat to this part of the Myles Dunphy Reserve, and vague promises to resolve the matter of its future without great delay, Hurstville Council's Draft Management Plan 2010 – 2014 does not even mention the site or Reserve. <http://www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/>

## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 5<sup>TH</sup> JUNE

"The global host of this year's World Environment Day celebration is Rwanda. This small country in the Great Lakes region of Africa is rapidly earning a reputation as a green pioneer. Home to 52 threatened species, including the rare mountain gorilla, Rwanda is showing how environmental sustainability [can contribute to] a country's economic growth". [Quote from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon [www.unep.org/wed/2010/english/media](http://www.unep.org/wed/2010/english/media) ]

## FAUNA IN OATLEY

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, a pair of Australasian (Little) Grebes or "Dabchicks" were feeding their stripy-headed chicks on the artificial wetland above the reed bed in Lime Kiln Bay. The adults were continually diving and popping up to the surface, but with little food to supply their begging young; the whole pond was covered in a floating carpet of red Azolla and green Duckweed. The water had become oxygen-starved and grebe food such as Mosquito Fish, larvae and molluscs was rapidly diminishing. There were three chicks, but each parent concentrated on feeding a single chick, with the third left to its own devices. This chick dived only rarely and spent most of its time gleaning what little food it could from the Azolla covering. "Favouritism" is common with grebes and the two favoured ones were clearly larger than the lone chick. By April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the adults had gone and the chicks left to fend for themselves. Were they abandoned, or just considered old enough to look after themselves? [Noted by David Waterhouse]

## OATLEY PARK THIS MONTH

Alan Fairley listed these as flowering in May / June  
**Sunshine Wattle** (*Acacia terminalis*) once known as Port Jackson wattle is a graceful, open shrub to about 1.5m high, with bright yellow flowers. The branches were a source of witchetty grubs.  
**Sweet-scented Wattle**, (*Acacia suaveolens*), a slender shrub to 2m, pale yellow or cream flowers.  
**Heath Banksia** (*Banksia ericifolia*) small crowded leaves, orange-red flower spikes  
**Variable Bossiaea** (*Bossiaea heterophylla*) shrub to 1m tall, yellow, and red pea-type flowers  
**White Fingers** (*Caladenia catenata*) white ground orchids with a single flower on a 20 cm stem

## WILDLIFE PARK?

A large block of land along the upper Hacking River at Helensburgh between sections of Garrawarra SCA, Royal National Park and the Illawarra Escarpment is to be auctioned at the end of May. As private subdivision and development of this land could pose serious threats to the wildlife of the area and the water quality of the Hacking River, OFF, among other organisations, is urging the NSW Government to consider purchasing this and adjoining blocks to add to the national park area.

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall, Fredrick St Oatley [near the corner of Letitia St] starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.

Visitors, including accompanied children, are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

### COMING EVENTS

**May 24<sup>th</sup> (Monday)** 7.45pm: Regular monthly meeting with **Holly Parsons**, Sydney Project Manager of the organisation *Birds in Backyards*, speaking on *Birds in Backyards*, promoting urban bird diversity, what we can do to make our gardens more bird friendly.

**May 30<sup>th</sup> (Sunday)** Field day: Sydney Harbour - Balmoral to Cremorne **Leader: Alison Gilroy**. Meet at 0800 at Cnr Hodgson Ave and Cremorne Rd, Cremorne. We will carpool to Balmoral, to Cnr Awaba St and the Esplanade, by 08.30, from where the walk will commence. Initially we go up over the hill to Clifton Gardens, then via the Harbour National Park, around the waterfront, to Reid Park Mosman for lunch. We finish with a walk around Cremorne Pt, back at the cars, about 3pm. [Bring boots, hat, sunscreen, water, lunch (and swimmers if desired)]. T 9580 5557

**June 28<sup>th</sup> (Monday)** 7.45pm: Regular monthly meeting with **Ray and Elma Kearney** speaking on *Fantastic Fungi - Facts and Findings*. Dr Ray Kearney is Associate Professor in the Department of Infectious Diseases, University of Sydney. Elma Kearney is an Executive member of the Sydney Fungal Studies Group.

### MEMORIAL TO FRED BELL

OFF determined to plant a memorial tree in Fred's honour, and the northern approach to the Como Bridge Walkway chosen as a suitable place. The formal planting will be on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May. People should gather at 10am at the start of the walkway, at the gate at the bottom of Myra Place Oatley, the cul-de-sac, left off Mimosa Street.

**Do put this in your diary.**

### SUSTAINABLE POPULATION

At the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, Kris Spike, the NSW Branch President of Sustainable Population Australia, spoke on Population & Sustainability. His theme was that continuing economic and population growth can only result in irreparable damage to the environment. Governments want to expand their countries, their population, and economies. Politicians, business groups, academics, and media commentators refuse to acknowledge the inherent problems arising from inexorable growth. The transition to an economic system based on stable levels of production and consumption would be full of challenges, but continuing with the intellectually bankrupt system of endless growth will hasten our headlong rush to environmental disaster.

### THE ULTIMO TOUR Thurs 14<sup>th</sup> April

We started at the Agincourt Hotel at the corner of Harris Street, with members of the group reflecting on the history of Agincourt and Henry V's battle with France in 1415. In a small lane behind the hotel, we observed some sandstone block construction bonded with shell mortar dating from Sydney's earlier days.

At the northern end of the Devonshire St, we saw the disused railway that once carried the goods trains to Darling Harbour. We looked inside the Peter Johnson building belonging to the UTS School of Architecture. We then moved to the ABC building with its TV and radio studios and the Eugene Goosens Hall. Outside we viewed the Gary Deirmendjian sculpture and then the Field building in Thomas St.

The next points were the city's major power substation, the old Haymarket Bell tower, and the disused railway bridge over Ultimo Rd before we came to the TAFE building, the Apprentice Restaurant, and a room containing historic items from early TAFE days. Along Mary Ann St, named after one of Surgeon Harris's daughters, is a row of early terrace houses. Then along Bulwara Rd, we came to the Ultimo Community Centre. The manager told us about the Centre and its various functions. Also in the Community Centre is the Jessie Street National Women's Library, and here we were told of its work and its books.

Following lunch at the Centre, we took a short walk to the Uniting Church where the Minister, Robin Davies, made us welcome, talked of the church and introduced us to the Coffee Table form of gathering. [cont]

We then went next door to the Harris Community Centre, previously the manse. Then, north along Bulwara Rd at Fig St, we saw the sandstone blocks with engravings of native plants. This was the end of our venture north and our return journey took us past interesting terrace houses. The final stop was at the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre where we had a guided tour of the complex, its pools and gymnasium.

[Report by Keith Robinson: Tour Leader]

### ILLAWARRA GREVILLEA PARK FIELD DAY May 1<sup>st</sup>

Twenty-five attended a very pleasant day at these beautiful gardens at Bulli. Plant sales just inside the gate were a popular stop. Moving on to the chapel area, we enjoyed a short talk on the history of the Park, and had morning tea. Equipped with maps, most did the rainforest walk, while some chose one of the several other walks. Meeting back for lunch, we then spent some time browsing around the gardens, especially enjoying the artistically arranged grevilleas. Then back to the plant sales, before we finally headed home.

[Report by Leader: Heather Mackey]

### BRIEFLY

**Answers to Global Warming Scepticism** by Heather Hughes & Fiona Bell-Whittaker is a non-technical summary of Fred Bell's in-depth study of this contentious subject. <http://pronomics1.com/answers.pdf>

**New Bus Route** Punchbowl Bus Co [PBC] has introduced Route 955 linking Hurstville, Oatley, Mortdale station, and return, on an hourly basis. This may help to reduce car use. It is suggested that PBC might change the times a little to link up the 955 buses with the trains at Mortdale and Hurstville that do not stop at Oatley. [Timetable T 9153 8787 [www.punchbowlbus.com.au/](http://www.punchbowlbus.com.au/)]

**Wood-Fired Electricity Plant:** Eden, on the south coast, is to be the first Australian town to be so powered, despite concerns that burning trees could generate more greenhouse gas emissions than burning coal. <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/>

**World Ocean Day** 8<sup>th</sup> June. Designation of World Oceans Day by the UN provides an important boost to those organisations and individuals deeply committed to ocean conservation and improving the health of our world's ocean. <http://www.theoceanproject.org/>



OFF Hon. Secretary: Liz Cameron,

P.O. Box 52 Mortdale 2223 Ph: 9580 6621, or <mailto:off@oatleypark.com>

Hon. Editor: John Davoren