

On behalf of our committee, I present the Secretary's Report on the activities of Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society Inc. in 2017. Many thanks to my fellow committee members for support and advice, and to the Hospitality Team for looking after members, visitors and speakers at our meetings.

This is a synopsis of the year's happenings; they have been covered in more depth in OFF News and on our website. Some highlights include

- Initiation of a Research Grants Program - a recommendation from the planning workshop in 2016. The first two grants went to postgraduate students studying respectively, Regent Honeyeaters and habitat restoration for hollow-dependent fauna
- Establishment of a Significant Tree Register to protect healthy public trees in Georges River Council LGA from inappropriate removal. Melina Amerasinghe was instrumental in this project which complements other OFF actions to conserve our tree canopy
- Completion of the wheel-chair accessible pathway in Oatley Park woodland near Myra Wall Garden; this was funded by a Georges River Council Stronger Community Grant to OFF
- Photographic competition organised by Shaun Keays-Byrne that resulted in the attractive images in the very successful *Oatley – Nature in the Suburbs Calendar 2018*
- Greening of the River Road Reserve near the railway underpass in Oatley with 850 native plants. Matt Allison organised this planting, assisted by 40 OFF members over two days; it is flourishing
- Recognition of John Davoren's excellent editorship of OFF News over nine years with a Banks electorate volunteer's award

We were saddened by the deaths of four members in 2017 – Rob Dickson, Jan Crane, Pat Donnelly and Peter Airey. Their friendship and contribution to OFF activities over many years has been much appreciated.

Membership has grown to 312; 17 people joined in 2017 and there is a high renewal rate. Robin Dickson's persuasive words in the renewal notice encouraged generous donations for the Research Grants Program. OFF also invites members to consider making a bequest to support our objectives.

Shaun Keays-Byrne and Keith McRorie are resigning from the committee but will continue to contribute to our Society in other ways. Val Douglas has stepped down from the Hospitality Team; hers is a very well-earned rest – Val was program officer for over 20 years and a member of the Hospitality Team for a further 13 years.

Communication with most OFF members is through our newsletter, website and Facebook page. Since John Davoren's retirement as Editor, OFF News has been produced by a sub-committee led by Shaun Keays-Byrne and Alan Fairley. We are looking for another Editor and Melina Amerasinghe would appreciate assistance with the OFF Facebook page.

Relocation of OFF meetings to the RSL and Community Club for the past two years has proven very satisfactory, so we are disappointed that the Club has reserved the auditorium for its own events on Monday nights. We hope the downstairs space in the Sports Bar will suit our meeting requirements and members will soon adjust to it.

Matt Allison produced another top line-up of speakers for the 2017 program; they included academics, authors and travellers. Average attendance remained steady around 55; 75 attended the screening of *Cultivating Murder* in April and Alan Fairley's talk in November on Iran, followed by a Christmas supper, attracted 63.

Graham Fry scheduled ten outings which had an average of 11 walkers, a disappointing decline. Most popular were two coastal walks led by Julian Sheen and Graham respectively, and Vicki Bolling's exploration of Centennial Park. We want more participants; please tell us which days of the week and destinations you prefer.

Sue Howard and Vicki Bolling organised a sociable Annual Dinner for 43 at the Oatley RSL and Community Club in June. The raffle had something for everybody and raised \$210. When rain threatened the annual picnic in Oatley Park, 20 members moved to the shelter of the Castle to share Christmas cheer.

The Lime Kiln Bay Wetland Awareness Project wrapped up with another walk in May when Kim Wagstaff outlined its structure and function to federal MP David Coleman and more than 20 others. Lime Kiln Bay was again OFF's site for Clean Up Australia Day; Alan Fairley registered 23 participants who collected 23 bags of rubbish, half of it recyclable. We'll be cleaning up there again on 4th March.

Stalls enable us to promote OFF's objectives to a wider audience. We fielded six stalls in 2017, the first at the Council's Australia Day celebrations in Carss Park (where we were rather hidden amongst food outlets). More suitable was the native plant giveaway on National Tree Day in Olds Park, where we assisted Council staff, and Alan Fairley advised on propagation. In December we had three 'pop-up' stalls in co-operation with Oatley Lions Christmas cake stand – two in Oatley and one in Mortdale. We flew the banner for OFF (made by Val Douglas) and had good sales of calendars and cards.

Our major effort was for the Oatley Lions Festival where two stall sites allowed space for more activities. Melissa Derwent had a children's nature craft table – another opportunity to introduce children to treasures found in bushland. Sustainability was promoted through our Community Tree Watch project and displays on recycling soft plastics and the EPA's Love Food Hate Waste campaign. The Oatley 2018 calendar was launched, and plants and bird cards sold well.

As well as Oatley Lions, OFF has teamed with Oatley Heritage and Historical Society and Georges River Bushcare Volunteers to advance mutual objectives. In August Shaun Keays-Byrne organised a working bee in Royal National Park to assist the National Parks and Wildlife Service with removal of invasive succulents; 15 OFF members and Bushcarers took part.

OFF launched a campaign for A Fresh Start in the September elections for Georges River Council. We invited candidates to make a commitment to ethical practices in local government and to express their views on local environmental issues such as the Oatley Bowling Club development. Few bothered to respond but we encourage members to monitor the performance of those elected to the GRC and follow Council matters on the Facebook page - Georges River Community Forum - and on the GRC website.

We continued to lobby MPs, Georges River Council and other authorities about our vigorous opposition to rezoning the site of former Oatley Bowling Club, and the need for reduction in plastic and beverage container waste, phasing out balloons, and cleaning up Lime Kiln Bay

OFF involves itself in a wide range of issues and we have made submissions on draft documents for the

- Greater Sydney Commission Plan
- Regulations and Codes for Biodiversity Conservation Act
- Travelling Stock Routes Reserves Review
- Plans of Management for Royal NP
- Marine Estate Management Strategy
- Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregion Assessment

Our letters and submissions are strengthened by the size of our membership, informed by advice from experienced members, and supported by the knowledge imparted by speakers at our meetings.

Reflecting the name of our Society, our members continue to share experiences and enjoyment of the local flora and fauna. Alan Fairley's Guide to the Trees of Georges River Council on our website is a valuable tool for nominating significant trees. Local naturalists and photographers frequently post observations of fauna on Facebook, and *Oatley – Nature in the Suburbs Calendar 2018* showcases the biodiversity of our neighbourhood.

I look forward to sharing further achievements by OFF in the coming year.

Elizabeth Cameron
Secretary, 4 February 2018