



## STREAMWATCH PROGRAM IN JEOPARDY

Streamwatch is a long running, citizen science water quality monitoring program, which empowers community groups to monitor and protect the health of local waterways. The program involves regular testing of waterways for pollution by the community and is popular with teachers and students. For almost 10 years, OFF volunteers have tested the water in local creeks. Unfortunately, the Australian Museum which runs this valuable program across metropolitan waterways, has advised that funding will cease at the end of June 2019, and if a new funding source is not secured, it's likely the program will no longer continue. The committee will approach the Premier and relevant ministers in a bid to secure funding for this vital program.

## MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE RESTRICTIONS

As many OFF members may be aware, the Georges River Council has fenced off the Oatley Bowling Club site, allegedly due to asbestos contamination. As public access to the bushland site has also been restricted (to contain the spread of the *Phytophthora* pathogen), this entire reserve is effectively closed to the public. OFF will be requesting Council to re-open the northern part of the site, as it has been tested as asbestos-free.

## PEOPLE POWER CLEANS GEORGES RIVER

On Sunday, 19 August 2018, 24 volunteers from OFF, Bankstown Bushland Society and Oatley Kayak Crew participated in a clean-up of the beach and surrounds at Beauty Point Reserve, on the Georges River at Padstow Heights. In four hours, volunteers collected 49 large bags containing hundreds of straws, bottle tops, lighters, syringes, and glass and plastic bottles, along with thousands of polystyrene pieces. The group were perplexed as to how a tyre and wheel, a suitcase and even furniture ended up in the river. An incredible effort by all those involved, which was recognised in 'The Express' (Canterbury Bankstown) local newspaper. To view, visit <http://off.oatleypark.com/?p=7342>



## SCREENING OF "SECRETS AT SUNRISE"

This documentary was screened during the August OFF meeting, and described the plight of the endangered Western Ground Parrot. The audience was captivated as the film documented the efforts of a dedicated team of volunteers, national parks and zoo staff, to conserve these elusive birds in the face of a series of disasters. A voluntary donation of \$5 collected at the screening raised \$260 for the Western Ground Parrot Rescue Fund. The DVD also includes footage of many other beautiful Western Australian plants and animals such as the tiny Honey Possum. OFF's copy of the DVD is available for loan to individuals or groups willing to make a donation to the Rescue Fund.

## OATLEY WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Oatley West Public School Community Festival was held on 25-26 August, 2018. At the invitation of the school's Festival Committee, OFF hosted a stall which was conveniently positioned and advertised by an OFF banner made by Val Douglas. At the stall was a model lent by the Australian Museum, to demonstrate the effects of good and bad water usage on the water quality in Georges River catchment - it proved a popular attraction.



OFF also publicised local collection sites for recycling beverage containers (Return and Earn), and soft plastics. Also on display was James' shopping bag crafted from a cotton T-shirt as an alternative to single use plastic bags. Six calendars were sold, a membership renewed, and many brochures handed out. OFF was pleased with the high number of visitors to the stall and their level of environmental awareness. Thanks to the many committee members who helped to promote OFF and its objectives at the Festival.

## HERITAGE RAILWAY TOUR: SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK

On a cool drizzly Father's Day, (Sunday 2 September, 2018) nine members took the 75-minute Heritage Railway tour on an electric-powered train from Newington Armory. The group travelled through an area of Sydney Olympic Park not accessible to the general public. A knowledgeable guide shared the history of this former armaments maintenance and storage site. The tour passed small isolated buildings featuring safety structures to prevent explosions, and stopped in at a shed housing disarmed torpedoes, shells and missiles.

At the conclusion of the tour, the group visited the nearby Birdlife Australia Discovery Centre which is open to the public on weekends. A highlight was watching live coverage (via remote cameras) of a White-bellied Sea-Eagle's nest in the adjacent Nature Reserve. Two adult birds were feeding a nestling in a large stick nest, found in this small remnant of Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Woodland.

After lunch at Newington shops, five remaining group members drove to a bird hide overlooking the Waterbird Refuge where they saw a variety of waterbirds including Avocets, Stilts, Spoonbills, Dotterels, Sandpipers and Godwits.

**Coming OFF Events in September/October 2018**  
OFF Full Year Events Calendar at: [off.oatleypark.com/program](http://off.oatleypark.com/program)

**23 September 2018 – Field Trip to Quarantine Station North Head**

A tour of heritage buildings and colonial history. The group will leave on the 8.43 am train from Oatley or 8.45 am train from Mortdale, in time for the 10.15 am ferry from Circular Quay - Wharf 3 to Manly. At Manly the group will take bus number 135 (from Stand D) at 11.19 am, arriving at 11.49 am at the Q Station Reception where maps can be obtained: [www.qstation.com.au](http://www.qstation.com.au).

The group will explore the 30-hectare site on foot (walking downhill), while enjoying the beautiful views across to the city skyline, as well as visit the free Quarantine Exhibition at the Visitor's Centre. BYO lunch or purchase at the Visitor's Centre Café or at the Boiler House Restaurant & Bar. There is a free internal shuttle bus service to and from reception, and it is suggested to take this bus for the steep climb back.

The visit will take most of the day. Return bus 135 departs from outside the Q Station at 3.59 pm, arriving at Manly Wharf at 4.07 pm, in time for the 4.25 pm ferry back to Circular Quay. First Time Leader: Yvonne Penn, call on: 9579 1760 or (preferably) 0449 798 974.

**24 September 2018 – Oatley Bushwalkers of Yesteryear, with Cliff Crane**

Cliff Crane (The Banjo) reminisces on famous and little known Oatley bushwalkers of yesteryear. Cliff's talk covers some of the many Oatley bushwalkers from the 1920s and 1930s through to more modern times. It will be interesting to hear about the early bushwalkers during an era of no or few marked tracks, few reliable maps, no GPS, no mobile phones, and no rescue helicopters. An anticipated highlight will be hearing about the original TIGER WALKERS.

**Advance Notice – OFF Outing to Mount Tomah Botanic Garden 27 October 2018**

The OFF outing planned for October will be a trip to the Mount Tomah Botanic Garden. This garden is located in the Blue Mountains and contains plants which naturally occur in cool areas. The gardens contain a mixture of Australian plants and exotics such as Rhododendrons. At this time of the year the gardens should be most spectacular with many plants in flower. OFF plans to hire a minibus to the gardens due to the distance involved and the lack of public transport to the area. Alternatively, members are welcome to drive themselves. For those planning to use the minibus there will be a fee of \$25 per head to cover the cost of the vehicle hire. The bus can only hold 20 people, so if you are interested please contact Graham Fry on 9580 6621 or [fryg45@gmail.com](mailto:fryg45@gmail.com) to secure a place.

**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.**

**BRIEFLY SPEAKING .....**

OATLEY PARK BUSHCARE group is on the second Saturday of each month starting at 12.00 pm. Meet at the entrance on Douglas Haig Street.

MYLES DUNPHY STREAMWATCH Details Heather Stolle 0425 291 879. This activity usually takes place on the Tuesday morning (9.00 am) after OFF General Meetings.

**INVITATION TO JOIN AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY MEMBERS AT SYLVAN GROVE NATIVE GARDEN Saturday 22 September, 2018**

The East Hills Group is hosting a regional gathering of Australian Plants Society (APS) members that includes a guided tour of Sylvan Grove at Picnic Point. OFF members are invited to join this free tour which will run from 10.30 am to 12 noon. Sylvan Grove is operated by Canterbury Bankstown City Council and has over 1500 species of native plants, many of which will be flowering.

Visit: <https://gardendrum.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Sylvan-Grove-Native-Garden-Picnic-Point-Sydney.pdf>

At 1.00 pm, Alan Fairley will be speaking to APS members on the topic of rare plants in Greater Sydney. The talk will be in the Peakhurst Lugarno Uniting Church, 909 Forest Road, Lugarno. Afternoon tea will be served and there will be plants for sale. OFF members are also welcome at this event, for which there is an entry fee of \$5.

**BIRD NEWS SEPTEMBER**

Spring has sprung, fortunately with a little rain and already the bush has reacted, looking a little healthier. Let's hope the rain continues. A reminder that as the weather warms up, leave out water for the birds – a simple bowl or dish in a secluded spot, preferably off the ground will be appreciated by our feathered friends, especially in dry times.

Spring is also a great time for bird watchers as the summer migrants are arriving from northern Australia and Asia. One of the most obvious migrants is the common Koel – I am sure you cannot wait to be awoken at 3.00 am by the penetrating calls of this bird! Given that the Koel is a brood parasite - that is, it lays its eggs in the nests of other bird species, the Red Wattlebirds are none too happy to see them. Red Wattlebirds are common hosts for the Koels, but by the time the Koels arrive, the Wattlebirds have already had one nesting attempt and can sometimes afford an interloper.

Another migrant is the Channel-billed Cuckoo, which parasitises Pied Currawong nests, and they have already been spotted in Sydney. They are often referred to as a flying walking stick with their long brown curved bill. Also, at this time of the year we are losing our winter visitors such as the southern form of the Silvereye, Golden Whistlers and Brown Gerygones, as they head back to their breeding grounds down south, which can be as far away as Tasmania. Good birding.

Graham Fry

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