



## THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS: GRAHAM LALCHERE

At the recent AGM meeting, Graham thanked the outgoing committee, stating that OFF could not function without a hardworking, productive and stimulating committee. He particularly thanked Melina Amerasinghe who is resigning from the committee after 16 years. She will continue as web site editor until the committee can find a replacement.

Graham also thanked the newsletter team including the new editor, Adelina Cubelic, who despite being busy with a young family, finds time to attend our editorial meetings and put together the newsletter in a timely and creative way.

He then thanked other groups for their efforts during the year, all of whom helped to make our 64th year another great one, as outlined by our diligent Secretary, Liz Cameron in her update.

Graham thought it timely to remind members of the great things that OFF has been involved with over the years and the battles that our predecessors have fought. He is indebted to Alan Fairley for documenting OFF's history in 'Being Green'. To view, visit the OFF web site at:

<http://off.oatleypark.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Being-Green-first-50-yrs-OFF.pdf>.

Rafe and Moira Kowron along with a few others, started OFF in 1955, when they became concerned about the wanton destruction and vandalism that was taking place in the natural bushland surrounding their new home.

Over the years, OFF grew along with Oatley - which changed, not always for the better when it came to its natural environment. OFF members have fought many battles to retain and improve their local environment, including:

- Proposal for an "all-tide" swimming pool at Oatley Baths.
- Road across Lime Kiln Bay from the Park to Peakhurst.
- Dumping of rubbish in Lime Kiln Bay.
- Second oval in Oatley Park.
- Marina off Jewfish Point projecting 76 metres into the Georges River.
- Disposal of rubbish in the bays of the Georges River.
- High tension power lines with associated stanchions routed through Oatley Park.
- Application for a Commonwealth grant to build a swimming pool in park.
- Application for a helicopter pad on Oatley Park oval, refused by Council.
- Threats to the environment increased in the 1980's but there was also increasing community awareness during this time.

Over the years, OFF also had members on Councils. Julian Sheen was Deputy Mayor of Hurstville for a time. One result was the Oatley Park Advisory Committee to oversee Oatley Park. However, threats continued - excessive hazard reduction burning by the Fire Brigade, leading eventually to a park fire policy. Hutchison Telecom communications tower and facilities constructed on edge of the park oval - which were removed after court action by Hurstville Council. Another challenge was mountain bikes causing significant damage to park.

On the positive side in 1990's OFF obtained nearly \$400,000 to rehabilitate various local bushland reserves. Our battle for the Oatley Bowling Club site is just the latest and continuing fight. Threats will always be there, so we need to remain vigilant and keep working to protect our precious environment, building on the legacy of past members.

## THE SECRETARY'S REPORT: LIZ CAMERON

Highlights for 2018 included:

- Georges River Council has decided to retain the Oatley Bowling Club site in public hands. OFF has campaigned tirelessly for this.
- OFF identified six environmental priorities on which to base its political efforts for the State and Federal elections.
- The grants sub-committee submitted consultant's report on the restoration of Oatley Park Castle to Council.
- OFF awarded grants to two post-graduate students and a previous recipient gave a talk on her project during the November 2018 meeting.
- The 'Nature of Georges River 2019' calendar made a surplus, and was sold at: four street stalls in Oatley, Mortdale and Lugarno and stalls at Oatley Lions Festival and Oatley West Community Festival.
- We undertook revegetation at River Road Reserve and Moore Reserve, planting 1000 natives bought with funds from the NSW Government and Councillor Grekas.
- Monthly Bushcare sessions in Oatley Park have continued.
- OFF helped at Council's National Tree Day plant giveaway but despite diligent monitoring and reporting by OFF members, trees are still dying and being illegally removed in our local government area.
- We supported: People's Referendum on coal and gas, banning mining under water catchments, investment in renewable energy, plastic-free Oatley, reducing pollution in our waterways, and saving the Streamwatch program.
- OFF recommended the names Boorea Reserve for the River Road Reserve, and Myles Dunphy Creek for the stream in Myles Dunphy Reserve.
- We hosted varied and interesting speakers at monthly meetings, which attracted an average audience of more than 50.
- We held 10 field outings averaging 11 participants per outing.
- The OFF Annual Dinner was fully booked and the raffle raised \$190.
- 27 people helped with Clean Up Australia Day in Lime Kiln Bay.
- OFF and Bankstown Bushland Society cleaned up Beauty Point Reserve on the Georges River.
- Melina Amerasinghe resigned from the committee after 16 years of service. Adelina Cubelic was appointed Editor of OFF News.
- Conservation Advisor Deb Andrew helped with submissions on environmental issues.
- Sharyn Cullis received a St George Community Award for her work in the Georges River Koala Network.
- OFF Rules were revised to become a Constitution, and a Mission Statement was adopted. Membership is just under 300.

## 'NEW' RARE PLANT FOUND AT BANKSTOWN AIRPORT

The Bankstown Bushland Society reports the discovery of the rare *Hibbertia fumana* by an ecologist working on a survey of developments near Bankstown Airport. It is a species first collected in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the last being in 1823. It did not come to light again until 2016 at a site in Moorebank. The population at the Airport appears to be about 100 plants.

The good news is that it is not threatened by the planned enlargement of the Airport and Bankstown Airport Ltd is committed to sympathetic management of the species.



*Hibbertia fumana*, Source: The Herald

**Coming OFF Events in February/March 2019**  
**OFF Full Year Events Calendar at: [off.oatleypark.com/program](http://off.oatleypark.com/program)**

**25 February 2019 – ‘Conservation and Management of Australia’s Drylands’ talk by Dr David Eldridge**

Dr David Eldridge is from the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences at UNSW, and is a research scientist with the Office of Environment and Heritage. He is currently working on management of biological soil crusts (lichens, mosses, etc.), woody plant encroachment (which is the change from grasslands to shrub lands), the impacts of grazing on plants, reptiles, soils, birds, etc., and the impacts of native and exotic animals on soils, e.g., what bilbies and bettongs do to soil and plants, impacts of wombats, rabbits, etc. He has also been looking at the impacts of feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park, which is a fairly hot topic at the moment. Most of David's work is carried out in the western part of the state, so it has an arid zone focus. David was a member of OFF back in the 1960's when George Dibley was President, and still holds a lot of fond memories of talks and outings from that time.

**3 March 2019 – Clean-up Australia Day**

This year OFF will be cleaning up the edges of Poulton Park. Meet at Morshead Drive at or after 8.30 am. We will supply gloves and bags, but you are advised to bring your boots for the swampy ground.

**5 March 2019 – Field Trip to the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney**

The group will catch the train leaving Oatley at 9:05 am and Mortdale 9:07am and meet at the Woolloomooloo gates at 10.00 am. The morning tour will be led by Gardens Guide and OFF member, Amanda Gibson. This will be a pleasant walk around parts of the RBG. The walk will occupy the morning, and be followed by lunch in the gardens – either bring your own or purchase at the cafe. The afternoon is free with the option to inspect the Myles Dunphy display at the State Library, or visit the Calyx in the RBG, where there is currently a display of carnivorous plants. Phone Amanda on 0419 010 994.

**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.

CITIZENS CLIMATE LOBBY meetings at Oatley RSL, held on the second Sunday or every month. All welcome.

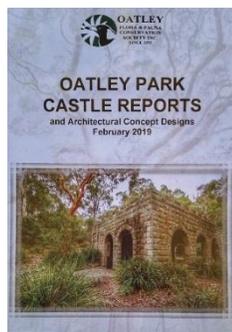
OATLEY GREY-HEADED FLYING FOXES Geoff Francis has been keeping records of the flying foxes in Myles Dunphy Reserve since 2010. Presently, there are more than 4000 roosting there. The majority fly out northwards at about 8.00 pm, with around 200 flying east.

**THE CASTLE AT OATLEY PARK**

The Castle is a sandstone shelter in Council heritage listed Oatley Park, constructed during the Great Depression (1930's). It is in desperate need of restoration, as much of the building has deteriorated due to exposure to weather and drainage problems. It also suffers from concrete cancer and in short, is rather shabby.

OFF obtained a grant to employ professional consultants to advise what is needed to refurbish the castle and improve its amenity for the local community. Architectural, heritage and engineering reports, which include assessments of what work will be required, have now been completed and sent to Georges River Council (GRC) for consideration.

Refurbishment will require repair/waterproofing of the roof, repair and possible strengthening of the roof slab and supporting beams and columns, rectification of drainage, cleaning of, and repairs to, and possible replacement of some sandstone blocks (including removal of internal paint), updating the barbecue and seating arrangements, and repairs to, and



improvements to the safety of the roof balustrade. Due to the requirements of the *Federal Disability Discrimination Act* disabled access to the roof has also been considered in the architectural concept plans. OFF has indicated to Council that it has concerns about the potential impact of such a structure on the building and its surrounds and urged council to undertake community consultation prior to final designs. Members attending the recent OFF AGM heard and saw more details of the consultants' reports, which are now in the hands of GRC.

**OFF MEMBERS TRIP TO KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK**

During the week of 6-13 January, 2019, 10 OFF members stayed at Pygmy Possum Lodge in Charlotte Pass. The coolness of the air was a refreshing respite from Sydney's heatwave. The vegetation in the area was flourishing. Wildflowers were not as profuse as in some previous years, but still colourful and varied, and swarming with insects.

The group met two biologists studying the pollinators – the bees, flies, butterflies and beetles, and shrewdly wearing pale loose clothing to deter the March flies. No mountain Pygmy Possums were sighted in the nearby boulder fields, but they are reported to have benefitted from the monitoring and trapping of cats. Unfortunately, a cat was sighted during the stay, and the group also encountered four deer near Sponnar's Inn one night.

The group spent the last evening on the banks of the Thredbo River – paddling, bird-watching and enjoying 'happy hour'. Just as most people departed a platypus emerged to feed – just as Deb Andrew had predicted.



During the week, many of the popular tracks were walked – Porcupine Rocks, Waterfall, Blue Lake, Main Range, Thredbo to Kosciuszko, Mount Stilwell, as well as Rennix and an overgrown roadway down Spencers Creek valley.