



OFF POLICIES FOR UPCOMING STATE ELECTION

OFF is calling on all candidates contesting the upcoming NSW state election to take a stand for our unique and precious natural environment. In September 2018, six environmental protection principles were adopted by the OFF committee. They are:

1. Establish a Sydney Marine Park – to protect this world-class coastal region.
2. Create a koala sanctuary in south-west Sydney – to protect this iconic species.
3. Set up a \$2 billion regional renewable energy fund – to fast-track the transition to clean energy away from coal.
4. Set up a \$1.5 billion land, biodiversity and forest habitat, and end logging of public native forests.
5. Remove of feral horses from Kosciuszko National Park.
6. Legislation to ban lightweight single-use plastic bags.



These principles were forwarded to the local political candidates for their comments. Liberal, Labor and Green candidates have each replied and their responses can be found on the OFF web site at:

<http://off.oatleypark.com/2019/03/07/2019-state-election-oatley-candidates-responses-to-our-questions/>

We held a street stall at Oatley on Saturday, March 9, 2019 to help raise awareness and gain further support. We will hold another one next Saturday morning (16 March) at Mortdale shops.

FERAL HORSES IN KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

Our February, 2019 speaker Dr David Eldridge, when presenting on the harmful effects of exotic animals on dryland soils, raised the current hot topic of feral horses and their impacts on Kosciuszko National Park. He showed photos of erosion along creeks and wetlands caused by the hard hooves of these horses which now may exceed 6000 in number.

His discussion is backed by a new fact sheet printed by Reclaim Kosci <https://reclaimkosci.org.au/>. This group aims to repeal the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act* passed in June 2018 which prioritises horses over the fragile ecosystems of the national park.

It argues that these horses do not have heritage value, that there is overwhelming scientific evidence that current numbers are causing severe damage, and that a number of critically endangered animals and plants are threatened. A recent study concluded that trampling, soil compaction and wallowing is resulting in stream disturbance, sphagnum bog and wetland destruction.

It seems that the most effective method of control, supported by the RSPCA, is aerial culling - shooting by professionals from helicopters. The NSW Government's decision to ignore scientific evidence sets a dangerous precedent for our protected areas.

OFF WEBSITE OFFICER NEEDED

OFF is looking for a website officer. If you are interested in the position, or would like more information on the role, please contact Graham Lalchere at <mailto:glach@gmail.com>

GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

After many years of struggle and disappointment, OFF is pleased to report that the Georges River Council has adopted an interim tree management policy. At a meeting of council on 25 February, 2019 there was a recommendation by two councillors to defer the policy pending a future report.

OFF members attended this meeting and Kim Wagstaff spoke of OFF's concerns. These included a call to implement the policy without delay and opposition to the inclusion of three ward councillors on the review panel. This meant that councillors with no expertise would adjudicate on tree matters and that the process would lack consistency across wards and give the appearance of political interference.

The Council finally adopted the policy as an interim measure with the Council Manager to report to the April meeting on outstanding issues. This was reported in the *St George and Surterland Shire Leader*, to view the full article visit: <https://www.theleader.com.au/story/5930770/tree-change-at-georges-river/>

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 2019

Clean-up Australia Day was on 3 March, 2019, held along the mangrove shores of Poulton Park, and was a great success. 25 people filled 18 bags of rubbish and collected various other items like shopping trolleys, timber pieces and fish traps. It was pleasing to see family groups and non-OFF members of the public volunteering. Thanks to Alan Fairley for organising the day and manning the OFF marquee, and to all those involved.



To view more photos from the day visit:

<http://off.oatleypark.com/2019/03/03/clean-up-australia-day-2019-at-poulton-park/>

EXTINCTION – BY CLIMATE CHANGE?

A report in late February, 2019 notes that a small rodent (*Melomys rubicola*) which lived on a sandy cay in Torres Strait had become extinct. According to the Queensland Government, this is the first recorded mammal species-loss because of human-induced climate change. It was known for decades as being in a precarious position. Being a long way from anywhere and also being a rat, it did not have much public advocacy. Its loss is a clear warning that other Australian animals are at risk.

BANKS VOLUNTEER AWARD 2019

Melina Amerasinghe was nominated by the OFF Committee to receive the Banks Volunteer Award which was presented by MP for Banks, David Coleman and Ken Wyatt, Minister for Aged Care and Indigenous Health at a ceremony on 12 March. Melina has been on the OFF Committee for 16 years and performed a number of tasks including Program Officer and the management of the Society's web site and Facebook page.

Coming OFF Events in March/April 2019
OFF Full Year Events Calendar at: off.oatleypark.com/program

25 March 2019 – Protecting the Fragile Ecosystems of the Kosciuszko National Park – by Linda Groom, Save Kosci Inc.

Convener of Save Kosci Inc. - Linda Groom - will speak of the recently completed walk from Sydney to the summit of Mt Kosciuszko to highlight the plight of Kosciuszko National Park whose threatened plant and animal species continue to suffer from damage by wild horses and other feral animals. The walk took place between 3 November and 8 December 2018, and totalled 560Km.

28 March 2019 – Planting and Maintenance Moore Reserve

Planting and maintenance at Moore Reserve between 8am and 11am. Meet at planting site near dog enclosure. Be sure to wear closed-toe shoes.

31 March 2019 – Field Trip to Wendy Whiteley's Garden

The group will leave Oatley on the 9:13 am train (9:15 am from Mortdale), meeting in the third carriage from the front. After catching the ferry from Barangaroo wharf, the group will alight at McMahon's Point and walk around Lavender Bay to the garden. This is a short walk with steps, both up and down. After the visit in the garden, the group will continue around the boardwalk, past Luna Park and up to Milsons Point. People can choose to catch the train home at this point or continue the walk across the Harbour Bridge (there is a lift at both the north and south ends of the bridge).

Leaders: Peter and Sue de Beuzeville (H) 8068 6149 (M) 0419 625 373.

Advance Notice – OFF Annual Dinner, 11 July 2019

Members and friends are invited to attend our Annual Dinner. The dinner will be held on Thursday 11 July, 2019, in the Macquarie Room at Mortdale RSL, 6.30 pm for a 7 pm start. The cost is \$38 per person. Dinner includes bread rolls, entree, mains, cupcakes, tea and coffee. Guests may purchase their own drinks at the bar. Donations for our annual raffle are most welcome. Contact: Sue Howard 9579 1718 or Vicki Bolling 9580 3107.

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 of every month. All welcome.

BANKS PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION 2019 To enter the competition, take a photo of any location in the Banks electorate, and email your submission with your name and the name of your piece, by March 25, 2019 to: <mailto:david.coleman.mp@aph.gov.au>

OFF GREENING OF MOORE RESERVE Georges River Council has put out a fact sheet on OFF's greening of Moore Reserve. It notes that OFF used a \$750 grant to purchase native plants for the initiative. Councillor Grekas, who allocated the money from the Councillor's Discretionary Ward Fund, volunteered on the day and admired the commitment of community members to their local environment.

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT GRANT AWARDED The Society has received a Commonwealth grant from local MP David Coleman for \$5,000 from the Stronger Communities Fund which will be used for the purchase and planting of native plants in Gannons Park.

STATE GOVERNMENT GRANT AWARDED The Society has also received a \$3,000 grant from the NSW Minister for the Environment's Conservation Fund, presented by local member Mark Coure. This grant will be used for planting at a local park.

OFF JOINS NEW ALLIANCES The society recently joined two alliances to protect sites with great environmental significance:

Reclaim Kosci <https://reclaimkosci.org.au/>

Give a Dam <https://www.giveadam.org.au>

FIRST MAINTENANCE DAY NEAR OATLEY RAILWAY STATION On 28 February, 2019 the first maintenance day was held at the area that OFF planted out near Oatley railway station. 8 members were joined by councillor Sandy Grekas, and they removed weeds and planted another 110 plants, provided by Georges River Council. Thanks to GRC officer Jason Cockayne and OFF member Matt Allison for their supervision, equipment and knowledge. It is intended to continue these maintenance days every fourth Thursday of the month.

JUVENILE PACIFIC BAZA IN MYLES DUNPHY RESERVE

An uncommon bird was spotted in trees between Myles Dunphy Reserve and Oatley Station. OFF member David Waterhouse reports seeing and hearing a juvenile Pacific Baza (*Crested Hawk*) in late February.

It was being fed by an adult. The adults probably nested in the Reserve, highlighting the importance of such suburban bushland patches.



To view video footage:

<https://www.facebook.com/896960500437558/videos/318622562332867/>

Our Deepest Condolences It is with sadness that we report the death of Lesley Winters. She, with her husband John, was a member of OFF since 1990 and served on the committee for 6 years. She will be missed by her friends in the Society.

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