

Secretary's Report to Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society's 65th AGM, 3 February 2020

Following is a summary of activities by Oatley Flora and Fauna in 2019.

Prior to the State election we identified a number of environmental protection principles and canvassed local candidates for their position on them, then posted responses on our website. We also handed out flyers on these principles and talked to voters in Oatley and Mortdale for weeks before the Federal as well as State election.

OFF representatives had quarterly meetings with the Mayor and Directors of Georges River Council to discuss big-issue topics including plans for Oatley Bowling Club site, Urban Forest and Tree Management Policies, compliance with building DAs, operation and management of the Lime Kiln Bay wetlands, and the future of the Streamwatch program; Council has been generally responsive. We made submissions on a number of GRC draft strategies.

Other submissions were made on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall, Moorebank Intermodal West Concept Plan, Snowy 2.0 Main Works EIS, Cruise Ship Terminal in Yarra Bay and Re-zoning of land near Helensburgh for residential development.

We have liaised with, and supported many environmental organisations including National Parks Association, Give a Dam Alliance, Protect Our Water Alliance, Reclaim Kosci, Sutherland Shire Environmental Centre, Wolli Creek Preservation Society, Australian Plant Society and Citizens Climate Lobby.

OFF contributes significantly to the Council Bushcare program. Many members are bushcarers, and OFF fields two bushcare teams each month – one in Oatley Park and one to maintain its plantings in other reserves. Council's 2018/19 scorecard listed 1,020 trees planted or given away – OFF members and supporters would have planted three to four times that number of native trees, shrubs and grasses in the past year, investing over 600 person hours. We obtained grants totalling \$8,000 from Federal and State sources for the plantings.

Members also undertook monthly Streamwatch sampling, ran a Clean Up Australia site with 25 volunteers, and removed graffiti on Graffiti Removal Day. GRC Councillor Ward Discretionary Funds contributed towards Streamwatch equipment and further plantings.

Our Treasurer summarised OFF donations in OFF News 11/2019. Thanks to generous donations from members, we were able to allocate \$6,000 for three post-graduate student grants in 2019, up from \$4,000 in 2018. Three past recipients delivered impressive talks on their projects at OFF meetings last year.

Monthly meeting attendance was down a little, averaging 45. The most popular speaker was David Eldridge on Australian drylands, and feral horses in Kosciuszko NP; David will be running a workshop on biological soil crusts for OFF in May. Other popular topics were the natural wonders of Western Australia (by Alan Fairley and Kim Wagstaff) and Jayden Walsh's presentation on frogs and reptiles.

Nine field outings had an average of 15 participants (an increase from 2018) and medium and hard walks attracted good numbers. Most popular outing was the history cruise on the Hawkesbury River. Last autumn, 23 OFF members spent a week in the Tarkine in Tasmania but the annual summer trip to Kosciuszko National Park was cancelled this January because of bushfires. (A small group of OFF members has lately been assembling and delivering resources for wildlife impacted by fires and heatwaves).

OFF has a reputation for friendliness, and field outings are a good opportunity to get to know fellow members. Other social events during the year were the Annual Dinner in July (fully booked) at which the raffle raised almost \$250, and the December Picnic in Oatley Park.

We were saddened by the deaths of the following members in the past twelve months – John Winters who was President for five years in the late 1990s, and his wife Lesley, Alan Argall who joined in 1977, and Hugh Stacy. We greatly value the loyalty of long-term members. Our membership has remained fairly steady as others join us, and we welcome new members warmly.

OFF nominated three members for electorate awards - Melina Amerasinghe - a committee member for 16 years who contributed to almost every aspect of OFF - for the Banks Volunteer Award, and St George Community Environmental Achievement Awards for Melissa Derwent, who has encouraged young families to enjoy nature and campaigned to protect local open spaces, and Deb Andrews our Conservation Advisor, who has provided expert advice for our submissions on environmental issues.

Stalls are an excellent avenue for raising OFF's profile and discussing environmental issues. At Oatley Lions Festival we talked about protecting koala habitat and reducing plastics, ran a popular children's craft activity and sold Oatley calendars and native plants. In anticipation of a cashless society, our Treasurer has set up a credit card facility for such purchases. We had three more stalls before Christmas in Oatley and Mortdale, alongside the ever-popular Lions' Christmas cakes and puddings.

In response to interest from other local organisations, we have prepared a presentation on OFF to illustrate our history and current activities.

Although our meetings in 2019 continued to be held in the Sports Bar, we are delighted this year to be able to move to the RSL Sub-Branch hall because air-conditioning has been installed; this was funded by a successful grant in the My Community Project program.

Elizabeth Cameron
Secretary, 3 February 2020