



O.F.F. NEWS



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Mar/April 2009

O.F.F. FIELD DAY 28 FEBRUARY 2009

29 of us plus 10 visitors took a very pleasant walk through the bush near Barden's Ridge. Aboriginal hand stencils, flat rock etchings, sights and sounds of the more recent artefacts of Lucas Heights Tip and ANSTO, and rare botanical specimens in the unique ironstone heath plant community (together with a colourful bush cockroach) were all part of the diversity of the day. Morning tea stop revealed a number of aboriginal tool sharpening grooves on a watercourse while luncheon saw us perched over Barden's Creek in the "Valley of the Giants" - named for the masses of majestic Gynea Lilies not quite in flower. As it was a February day the early finish was welcome. [Report by Joan Bell, walk leader]

NATIONAL PARKS: PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

The NSW Government proposes to weaken the laws on national park leases to make it easier to build new "eco-resorts", cabins and semi-permanent camps. It claims that it will help tourism and provide extra funds for park management. Public meetings against these proposals have strongly reacted against this move. The Colong Foundation has the details, is encouraging people to protest, and points to the National Parks Association website with its detailed suggestions about how best to express concern. The Colong Foundation Office [phone 9261 2400] would also like to hear from us. <http://www.npansw.org.au/>

OATLEY BOWLING CLUB SITE

The *Friends of Oatley's* public meeting of last September was strongly of the view that this part of the Myles Dunphy reserve should not be alienated [sold or leased to a private entity], that the 6(a) Open Space zoning should be maintained, and the site reserved for community services and recreation. Hurstville Council did not discuss the matter at its meeting on 25th February, to the great disappointment of the 20 or so people in the public gallery who had gone to hear the debate and to indicate their interest to Council members.

GYMEA LILIES

(*Doryanthes excelsa*) are found on the coast and adjacent plateaus. Honey-eaters love the nectar of these large, crimson flowers on stems 2-3 m tall. Aboriginal people in the Lake Macquarie district of NSW were observed in 1836 roasting the stems and with the roots they made a type of cake.

<http://www.anbg.gov.au/aborig.s.e.aust/>

PLATYPUS STING

Studies suggest the venomous hind-spur of the male platypus could be used medically for pain-relief or as an antibiotic.



<http://editorial.australiangeographic.com.au/>

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

O.F.F.'s *Clean Up Australia Day* site this year was in Myles Dunphy Reserve near the former Oatley Bowling Club. 33 people attended, collecting 29 bags of rubbish with a load of other material, including large car parts (thanks Matt and Faye) and 2 train seats that were returned to the railways (thanks Liz & Graham). A very successful day and 2 members won raffle prizes from Hurstville Council for their trouble! [Report by site coordinator, Graham Lachere].

GRAYTHWAITE HERITAGE PARKLAND

The NSW Supreme Court has ruled that this historic North Sydney site can be sold. The decision does not appear to give due weight to the spirit and intent of Sir Thomas Dibbs's original gift of the property in perpetuity. <http://graythwaite.org.au/>

CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION SCHEME

On March 10th, the Federal Government released its draft legislation on the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme inviting consultation on the terms and effectiveness of the Bill in delivering the White Paper's policy decisions. The draft is online at <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/>.

BUSHFIRE DONATIONS

\$30 was donated by those attending the March 2nd OFF meeting. This money has been passed on to the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal.

EARTH HOUR 2009

Earth Hour 2009 begins at 8.30pm on Saturday 28th March. Do turn off your lights for the event, and, we suggest, light a candle at a prominent window to show that you have not just gone out for the evening. You are encouraged to sign up on the Earth Hour website to be counted among those who have observed this special world wide event this year. The website is <http://www.earthhour.org>

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.

Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

March 23rd (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Jane Tarran speaking on **Biodiversity in Urban Sydney**. See the note below on People and Plants.

March 28th (Saturday) 8.30pm Earth Hour 2009 [see page 1].

April **3rd (Friday evening) Field Day - Spotlighting in Oatley Park, Leader Debbie Andrew. Spotters will meet at the top entrance to Oatley Park at 7:30 pm and head off about 8:00 pm. Children must be accompanied by a parent. If another adult is delegated [even a grandparent] the parents must sign a risk waiver before the spotlighting. A risk waiver form can be obtained from Janet Austin [phone 9579 2375]. Bring a torch, binoculars and digital camera if you have them. We hope to see possums and some night birds while walking around the top of the oval and down to the Lime Kiln Bay Road. Expected time is about 2 hours. Cancellation only if it is raining heavily. ***Please note change of date from Mar 27th***.

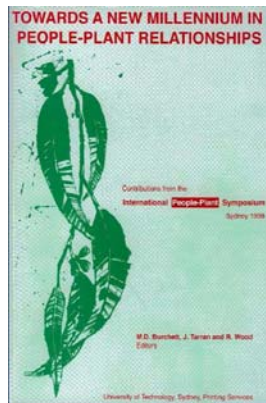
April 27th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with Mary Jacobs speaking on **The Story of the Dharawal, the Aboriginal people of Southern Sydney**.

May 3rd (Sunday) Field Day - Walk: Thornleigh to Fullers Bridge. Leader Alan Fairley. About 14km of moderate difficulty along good tracks and valley of Lane Cove River. See next OFF News for more detail.

PEOPLE AND PLANTS

Dr Jane Tarran*, Senior Lecturer at UTS in Urban Ecology is our speaker at the Mar 23rd meeting. Her professional areas of interest and research include urban forestry and urban ecology - the uses and benefits of trees and other vegetation in urban areas. Jane is co-editor of the book pictured here.

* <http://www.science.uts.edu.au/>



ABORIGINAL MIDDENS AND CAMPSITES AROUND SYDNEY

Paul Irish is a consultant archaeologist conducting Aboriginal archaeological surveys and excavations, and researching Aboriginal history. He spoke at the Feb 23rd meeting, about middens. He indicated that shell middens are found in coastal areas throughout Sydney and indeed throughout the world. They are coastal campsites containing the remains of shellfish, bones from a range of fish species and land and marine mammals, birds and reptiles, as well as the remains of fireplaces, human burials and other features. The middens help preserve organic remains (such as animal bones) that would otherwise have been degraded by acid in the soil. Because of the range of food remains and artefacts they preserve, middens are of particular interest to archaeologists, helping them to learn, for example, about the diet of Aboriginal people and the layout of their campsites. Although only a small proportion of the known middens around Sydney have so far been excavated it is clear that most are less than 3,000 years old. Paul pointed to some of the challenges that have to be faced in ensuring that evidence of past Aboriginal waterfront living is respected and protected, especially by present foreshore residents. The talk was particularly well attended with about 65 members and visitors in the audience.

Apologies to those who cannot connect with these websites, but, for those who can, many interesting pages, not available through mail or telephone can be opened.

BRIEFLY

Permaculture St George meets on the second Friday of each month, at 7pm at Mortdale Pensioners' Hall, 76 Pitt St, Mortdale. At its March meeting Matt Heffernan spoke on the nutritional value of dandelion, sow thistle, fat hen and summer green bushtucker - munyeroo (pigweed) and how the Aboriginal people immediately incorporated the introduced plants to their diet and traditions.

The Centre for Sustainability Leadership [CSL] is offering a seven-month *Fellowship Program* of weekly workshops, group activities, mentoring and residential retreats, focussing on essential leadership qualities and skills. Students currently enrolled at university and young professionals may apply. Scholarships are available. Applications close on 30th March. Details at <http://csl.org.au/index>
Catalysing Hope for a Sustainable Future 5.45pm -7pm Tuesday 14 April Sydney University, General Lecture Theatre, Main Quadrangle. Speakers Professor Sir John Meurig Thomas (Cambridge University), Dr Frits Dautzenberg (Serenix/ABB Lummus) and Dr Ian Maxwell (MaxCo), followed by a panel discussion and reception. To RSVP, <mailto:events@science.usyd.edu.au>

Clean Up Australia HQ reports that an estimated 8,300 tonnes of rubbish were collected this year, a 15% increase over last year's Clean Up Day. <http://www.cleanup.org.au/au/>

OFF NOTE

The Cheetah Family Portrait

Interacting with her 3 cubs, Mother Cheetah purrs.

