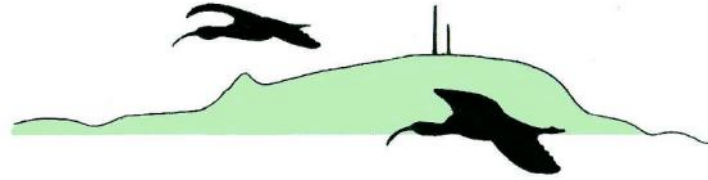


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2022

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 8th December, 7.30 pm.

Face to face at Community Services Centre,
286 Lords Place, Orange

Meeting to Plan the 2023 OFNCS Program

Excursion

**Sunday 11th December
Wambool Nature Reserve**



Wishing you and your family a safe and relaxing Christmas. May you enjoy the delights of nature that surround us in 2023.

Next Meeting – Thursday 8th December, 7.30 pm. Planning Meeting.

NOTE – the different venue of Community Services Centre, 286 Lords Place, Orange

This meeting will plan the OFNCS program for 2023. There will be no speaker but please come along and suggest speakers and excursion locations. If you can't come, please send suggestions to orangefieldnats@gmail.com

Next Excursion – Sunday 11th December, Wambool Nature Reserve.

Meet at Orange High Bus Bay at 9 am.

In previous years Field Nats have joined with ECCO to hold a joint get together for Christmas. This year ECCO have decided not to hold a get together.

As several excursions have been cancelled due to the weather, OFNCS will substitute a Christmas gathering with another attempt to hold an excursion to Wambool Nature Reserve. It will be a full day. Bring your lunch and other necessities. We will park on the road and walk along one of the trails some of which will be up

hill. Wear sturdy footwear and long pants. There are no toilets beyond Bathurst.

At the meeting and on the excursion, you will be responsible for the Covid safety of yourself and others. Please do not attend if feeling sick or if you have been a close contact in the week beforehand. Car-pooling is encouraged on the excursion, and it is up to the driver and passengers to agree on whether masks need to be worn.

Last Talk - The Movement and Monitoring of Superb Parrots. Speaker – McLean Cobden, Difficult Bird Research Group, with support from Australian National University, Australian Capital Territory Government, and the NSW Department of Primary Industry. Report by Nigel Nobden.

McLean has been undertaking the monitoring of Superb Parrots nesting within old growth Eucalypts: including Ribbon Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), Candlebark (*E. rubida*) and Apple Box (*E. bridgesiana*) at Bloomfield Park, south Orange for the past three years.



McLean preparing to check a potential nest hollow in Orange. Photo Nigel Hobden.

Superb Parrots (Superbs) are listed as a Vulnerable Species under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act. Superbs are endemic to southeastern Australia and McLean outlined how the seasonal movements of Superbs are poorly understood. There are two distinct breeding areas. The Murray-Murrumbidgee Valley breeding area, linear areas along the two river systems where Superbs nest in hollows of River Red Gums (*E. camaldulensis*). The other is the South West Slopes breeding area stretching from the ACT to just north of the Lachlan River.

McLean outlined the key points of the Superb Recovery Plan:

- Identify, protect, manage and strategically restore Superb Parrot breeding, foraging and movement habitats at the local, regional and landscape scales
- Define, monitor, reduce and manage threats and sources of Superb Parrot mortality at the local, regional and landscape scales
- Expand and sustain ecologically meaningful monitoring to track change in Superb Parrot distribution, habitat use and population size, including developing and applying techniques to measure the success of recovery actions
- Improve understanding of Superb Parrot movement ecology across multiple scales to better target protection and restoration measures
- Engage local communities and stakeholders in Superb Parrot conservation
- Coordinate, review and report on Superb Parrot recovery progress.

The aim of the plan is to increase and maintain population levels so that the species is no longer threatened and to enable self-sustaining wild populations to persist.

Superbs are susceptible to a range of risk factors as are most native fauna species:

- Habitat loss – removal of hollow bearing trees and land clearing removing foraging sources
- Climate change – range contraction and shifting
- Competition for resources – hollows and food sources
- Road strike as they frequently feed on spilt grain from transportation means
- Poaching.

McLean has been undertaking the monitoring of nest sites in the Canberra region and specifically two breeding populations in 2017 and 2021. One hundred and three nests have been monitored and 209 nestlings measured. The program has expanded to nest sites near Darlington Point, on the Murrumbidgee River, and in the Central Tablelands at Orange, near Carcoar and Mumbil. Ninety-four nests have been monitored across these sites with 205 nestlings measured.

Following trials with aviary birds GPS trackers which weigh no more than 4% of an adult male's body weight are fitted to male birds to enable satellite tracking and monitoring of seasonal movements. The harnesses are attached with cotton that breaks if caught or breaks down over time and the tracker falls off. Sixteen GPS trackers have deployed.

GPS tracking results to date indicate that the species is highly mobile, that there is a distinct social organisation structure and possible isolation amongst the Superb Parrot populations.



McLean and a colleague fitting a GPS tracker on a male Superb Parrot. Photo Nigel Hobden.

McLean's monitoring is suggesting that the birds are highly individual. Some are migrating and some are resident in the one location, especially where there is a good food supply such as in Canberra. He has also found that where lots of hollows are available in suitable habitat the Superbs nest together and could be considered to be colonial nesters. This occurs in the Red Gums in the Riverina.

The key outcome for Orange is that we must continue to protect old growth trees with hollows, both living and dead, as they are so critical to Superbs and a host of native fauna for nesting and breeding.

Exciting Follow-up to Superb Parrot Talk

During his talk McLean said finding the Superb Parrot nests was the hardest part of his work. He was also asked if Superbs used nest boxes. His answer was no; there have been very few if any records of this.

On 18th November Bernie Huxtable emailed to say he, Colina and his eagle-eyed daughter Georgie had made an interesting sighting. He said *'we often watch parrots nesting in Bloomfield Park. The old trees there must be preserved at all cost! Yesterday a male Superb entered a nest box and was still there when we left 10mins later. This is the first time we have seen one of these nests used.'*

They saw them again on the 20th November as well as Galahs using another box. There were also Crimson and Eastern Rosellas nesting in Bloomfield Park.

Rosemary passed the details on to Nigel who contacted McLean. On 25th November Nigel reported that *'McLean has inspected the nest box and within it there were 4 Superb Parrot nestlings approximately 2-3 weeks old! According to McLean this is a "Pretty huge development for Superb Parrots! Well done to the person that spotted it". It will be interesting to monitor this box over the next few breeding seasons to see if further occupancy and breeding occurs. Thanks so much for reporting this through to Rosemary, Bernie.'*

If you think you have seen Superb Parrots nesting, please report your sighting and the location to orangefieldnats@gmail.com and it will be passed on to McLean.

Last Excursion: cancelled due to wet weather.

OFNCS Committee News

OFNCS made a submission on the Macquarie Bogan Regional Water Strategy. The Society was also one of the partners in the Wyangala Counterpoint Group's submission on the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy.

Mt Canobolas Update

Snow fell on the mountain on November 16 and a few trees came down in the extreme

weather on November 13. Despite this weather the *Calytrix*, *Kunzea* and *Pultenaea* flowers are adding colour to the mountain. The Yam Daisies, Bulbine Lilies and *Ranunculus* are also adding bright yellow to the colour palette.



Mass flowering of the regrown heath at The Walls. Photo Hai Wu.

Col Bower has been doing follow-up surveys of the tagged *Paraprassophyllum canobolense* and *Caladenia fitzgeraldii* orchids. His aim is to look at their post fire response. Given that this is such a 'good' season Col says the survey results also tell something about the species response to seasons. He has found that the *C. fitzgeraldii* has had the biggest flowering since the fire indicating that it flowers in response to fire as well as seasonal conditions. *P. canobolense* has responded differently with lots of flowers after the fire and only a small percentage of the plants flowering this year. This suggests it is responsive to fire but not seasonal conditions. Col has also found that several plants have been predated.

The redevelopment of the summit is nearing completion with asphaltting being done on Tuesday 29th. I understand there will be an official opening probably in the first few weeks of December. The Spring Glade Carpark will also be fixed up. New signage has been installed including at Orange View Lookout.

Central West Environment Council

Representatives from 12 CWEC member groups met on 6th November, in Orange, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the formation of the group. In this time CWEC has worked to fulfil many of its objectives, the first five of which are:

- To promote, stimulate, assist or co-ordinate environmental and conservation actions and causes throughout the Council area, or elsewhere, as determined by the Council.
- To work for the conservation of the natural environment of the Council area, its

landscape, biodiversity, waters, air, subterranean systems, and First Nation heritage.

- To advocate and campaign for the wise use of the area's natural resources.
- To provide a network and promote the exchange of information on conservation and environmental issues both within the Council's area and with other organizations elsewhere.
- To represent generally the views of Group members as may be engaged in any aspect of the conservation of the Council area and to support, as requested, the conservation activities of its members.

As usual the issues discussed related to water, mining, and protection of the environment. Those groups in the Renewable Energy Zone have been overwhelmed by the need to respond to the number and size of very large renewable energy projects destined for the Mudgee, Dubbo, Dunedoo, and Coolah areas. Two new 500 kv transmission lines are also proposed which will also have significant impacts on the environment and landscape.

Members thanked Cilla for her commitment to CWEC over the last 15 years as President and her advocacy for the environment. A new president will be elected at the AGM which will be held on Sunday 5th February by Zoom.



The CWEC anniversary lunch was accompanied by music from Autumn Leaves that included multi-talented Cilla and Nick. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

FALCONCAM

Report compiled by Rosemary Stapleton from the webcam blog and email exchanges.

If you tuned in to the Falconcam website at night during November, you would have noticed that the infra-red light had been turned off. I was surprised to learn that this was because mosquitoes had been bothering the chicks. Another consequence of this wet

weather! Later in the month this allowed a good view of the lighting on nights when storms came through.



Indigo, the first Peregrine chick to fledge, showing juvenile plumage of vertical stripes on its breast. The smaller chick looks the same but may still has some fluffy feathers on its back. Photo Cilla Kinross.

Indigo, the larger chick fledged on November 11th at 0700 and flew strongly into the trees below the tower. Cilla and others have monitored him and have found him flying well, on the roof of one of the buildings under the tower, and later, on a bench outside the laboratory. Rubus, the other chick was still in the nest box and finally fledged on the morning of November 20th but not very well. As it was such a windy day Cilla was very concerned for this chick as it was not as well developed as it should have been at 46 days old and may have needed rehabilitation. She put a call out for volunteers to help search for it but managed to find the fledgling herself.

Unfortunately, Cilla called for help again on Saturday 26th as the younger Peregrine had not been seen for three days. It was still not flying strongly, and Cilla was concerned it may have a disease or injury. John H and Nick responded and, with Cilla, flushed a falcon from the woods up to the tower. As they couldn't see the larger chick, Indigo, in the nest box they assumed the bird was Indigo. However, when checking the webcam footage Cilla found Indigo had been in the box all the time. So, was the flushed bird Rubus? John had his camera out but 'got a bit excited' and his photo wasn't that well focused. He did get other great photos of juvenile Peregrines. Cilla is still worried about the smaller fledgling. She would prefer to see all four Peregrines on the roof at once.

If you are interested in seeing the Peregrines, please contact Cilla on 0439 815 791 and

organise a time to go. The parent Peregrines get very distressed with people wandering around the area at different times and Cilla would prefer people to go in an organised group.

Funnel Web Spider Story

The spider talk by Ben Shoad in October reminded past OFNCS President Jennifer Kenna of a funnel web spider experience during Easter 1986. Field Nats was conducting a biodiversity survey in the Central Mullion Ranges around the Oakey Creek area. Jennifer emailed to say ‘*We had pit fall traps and it was Paul Meeth's job to clear them. There were several funnel web spiders in them one morning. As we were standing around noting what we had found, Paul who had a tall silver bucket said, ‘I have 2 Funnel Webs..... looked in the bucket and declared, there is only one in there!’ I was standing behind Paul, looked down and there on the bottom of his baggy shorts was the other one. Luckily my clip board was able to send it flying.*’

When asked if he remembered this Col Bower commented ‘*The males wander about in autumn after rain looking for females. They are quite prone to desiccation and only come out when the humidity is high, which explains the one-off appearance.*’

Dates for your Diary

2023 Cowra Woodland Bird Surveys,

Dates for 2023 are February 15/16 April, 15/16 July, 14/15 October and 17/18 February 2024. Contact Julian Reid on **0405 922 505** or at julianr@homemail.com

Snipe count date is January 14, 2023.

Fungi Events – probably 7-13 May 2023. Liz Davis, Central Tablelands LLS, is planning bigger and better events that will coincide with Compost Week. There will be workshops with Alison Pouliot and evening sessions with speakers and fungi food. Forays will be held, and identification will be from photos and only rare species will be collected.

Sightings around Orange

Creatures and Features

Vale to all the dead the **Worms**. In the last few months, I have been amazed at the number of worms that have died on paths, roads and

walking tracks due to the ground being so saturated.

At least some worms are surviving as Hai saw this living yellow Planarian on the Gum Ridge Fire Trail (photo below).



Photo Hai Wu.

Eclipse of the moon

On the 8th November there was a full eclipse of the moon. This shot below was captured just before the clouds moved across the sky. I understand from John Z that the eclipse was quite red from where he watched it in Japan.



Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Orchids

Nigel ventured to Evans Crown Reserve for a quick scramble and found a range of orchid species – *Caladenia*, *Diuris sulphurea*, *Microtis unifolia* (of which he has hundreds growing in his lawn) and *Pterostylis mutica* and *P. bicolor* (below).



Photo Nigel Hobden.

If you see anything interesting, please email orangefieldnats@gmail.com or post it on Facebook.

Creature of the Month.

Asterella sp.

Text by Jenny Medd.

Cryptogam surveys in the Mt Canobolas SCA have led to some interest amongst OFNCS members in the mosses, liverworts, hornworts, and lichens that occur not just on the Mountain, but which catch the eye on excursions all around the district.

For those who don't have the background training to identify the variety on offer, there's a great resource to tap into at: <https://www.anbg.gov.au/plant-groups/index.html>, which features "text books on the web". There's a wealth of information and photos to explore as you work your way through to establishing what you may have seen and/or photographed. Such was the experience to identify this *Asterella* sp., confirmed by a recent expert from Canberra who contributes to this on-line resource.

Asterella drummondii complex is described as a widespread complex thallus liverwort.

In a **thallose** liverwort you'll see a flattish, green sheet (a leaf-like structure)- possibly

wrinkled or lobed. Such a sheet is called a **thallus**. The thallus is many cells thick and the cells in different layers within the thallus have different functions. The umbrella-like structures, which grow out from the flat, green thallus, are part of the gametophyte, the sexual phase of the plant's life cycle. Spore capsules develop underneath those umbrella-like archegoniophores. An archegoniophore holds the microscopic **archegonia**, each of which contains one egg. A fertilized egg will produce a sporophyte (a multicellular spore-producing phase).



Asterella drummondii at Healeys Rd, July 2022. Photo Jenny Medd.



'Evans Crown fantastic Tors, such a scenic place.' Comment and photo Nigel Hobden.



*Boree Creek, 22 November 2022, from the bridge on Peabody Road. Note the scouring and trees down in the foreground and in the distance beyond the trees the reddish brown of the high creek bank that has been heavily eroded. Just one part of the destruction caused by the extreme rainfall.
Photo Rosemary Stapleton.*

To join please send your cheque or money order made out to "OFNCS" to the Hon. Treasurer, Dr Dick Medd, OFNCS, PO Box 369 Orange NSW 2800.

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Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, including the people of the Wiradjuri Nation, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

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