

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 14th July, 7.30 pm. Nguluway Ngurang Senior Citizens Centre North Room (Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

Birds, plants, and passion for nature in the Conimbla and Gooloogong area. Speakers – Jayden Gunn and Tracee Burke.

<u>Excursion</u> Kangarooby Landcare bird survey site, Healeys Rd, Gooloogong.

Details below

<u>Next Meeting</u> – Thursday 14th July, 7.30 pm. Birds, plants, and passion for nature in the Conimbla and Gooloogong area.

Speakers – Jayden Gunn, Central NSW Woodland Birds Project Coordinator for BirdLife Australia and Tracee Burke, Mid-Lachlan Landcare Coordinator.

Both Jayden and Tracee are in official roles but will also share their personal journeys of learning to love nature. Jayden, a Cowra local, will focus primarily on birds and his connection with them and Conimbla National Park. This will be from a Birdlife Australia viewpoint as well as his own experiences of them in Conimbla. Tracee will talk about some of the plants (including orchids) that have been found in the park as well as a Glossy Black Cockatoo Project. She will share why she is passionate about learning all she can both as a landholder with a property near Conimbla, and as a citizen scientist and Landcare Coordinator.

<u>Next Excursion</u> – Sunday 17th July

Kangarooby Landcare bird survey site – a parcel of Crown Land on Healeys Road, south of Gooloogong. Other than looking for birds we will wander along a creek to observe all aspects of the environment. It is a survey site for Kangarooby Landcare and the Birds on Farm Project. They have seen 30 species in 6 surveys since starting surveys 9 months ago. This includes species like Turquoise Parrot (twice), Speckled Warbler and a range of honeyeaters and finches. Perhaps these good birds are seen as it is in a valley sandwiched between Conimbla National Park and uncleared hills to the west. It will be good to see what plants and other species we can see.

Meet at 9.00am at Orange High School Bus Bay. This will be a full day excursion as we will travel to Gooloogong via Canowindra and meet Jayden there. The site is to the south down Kangarooby Rd. Bring morning tea and lunch. Wear sturdy footwear and long pants as there will be some uneven and muddy terrain. We will aim to leave the site by 2.30 pm. Carpooling is encouraged. It is up to the driver and passengers to agree on travelling together and whether masks need to be worn.



Glossy Black Cockatoos feeding in Conimbla National Park in 2008. Photo R Stapleton.

For all these activities you will be responsible for the Covid safety of yourself and others who come along. Please do not attend if feeling sick or if you have been a close contact in the week beforehand. Last Talk: Nature Photography with an emphasis on birds. Speaker – John Cooper. *Text Rosemary Stapleton, photos John Cooper.*

Orange Camera Club members, as well as Field Nats members were enticed to come out on a bleak night to see John Cooper's stunning bird photos and learn lessons on how he achieves such images. I wondered about his first photo which was of a book about fungi. John explained that his interest in nature photography was prompted by the purchase of this book. We saw the results in clear and colourful photos of fungi from the Megalong Valley. He explained his use of fill in flash and flash above the fungi to highlight the translucence of some species.

He moved on to what I thought were the most magical and natural photos of his presentation, dew encrusted damsel and dragon flies and alpine skippers. Seeing Col Bower heading into a sphagnum moss bog in Kanangra Boyd National Park to take photos of insects immobilised by the cold prompted John to try taking similar photos.

In 1986 a bird photography course at Binna Burra, in Lamington National Park, set John on his bird photography journey. Two hides had been set up at nests: one of a Satin Bowerbird and the other an Eastern Yellow Robin. On returning to Cowra John's first hide was simply a wool bale placed over four steel posts in a dam to photograph a nesting Australasian Grebe. Over the years he has found favourite spots to set up ever more sophisticated hides and platforms for his photography.



Hungry mouths being fed. Magpie-lark and nest high in a eucalypt. Photo John Cooper.

On finding a nest John sets up the hide some distance from the nest and each day moves it a little closer to the nest, always monitoring the reaction of the birds. The hides can be adjusted so he is at the same level as the nest. We saw the result in the photo of the Magpie Lark adult feeding a frog to four chicks. Some of the nests were very high therefore so were the hides!

John usually uses flash and when asked said the birds don't seem to react to it. However, he has found that the bigger birds are more timid, such as the nesting Brolga west of Quandialla that he photographed. Other advice John gave was to know bird behaviour so you can capture special photos such as the spreading natal plumes of a nesting egret when greeting its partner or of bill stretching of a pelican. He also finds that close up shots show what he called the exquisite and often unseen features of common birds, like the Crested Pigeon.



Other photos were taken where John had used a 'ground level' hide. He sets out food or water and places a 'natural' perch, held on a tripod, as a prop for the birds to go to and from feeding or bathing. Like the hides John has constructed a 'naturalistic' birdbath from a frog pond so it appears to be a rock pool (above). We saw the results in classic shots of Superb Fairy Wrens, finches, honeyeaters, and Eastern Rosellas.



Last of a series of a lone Magpie Goose being chased from near the nest of a sitting Black Swan. Photo John Cooper.

We also saw photos from several trips John has made including one to Bowra Wildlife Sanctuary, just West of Cunnamulla. When asked if he used a hide there John commented his photos were taken just walking around and that he used to use a tripod, but this was no longer necessary because of the image stabilisation in new cameras.

At the end of the talk no-one was keen to leave, and some could have stayed longer to see more of John's stunning photos. Thank you, John, for sharing your journey from photos of fungi with a film camera to your wonderful bird photography taken with your unique equipment and the new camera technology.

Last Excursion: cancelled due to wet weather.

OFNCS Committee News

Once again Dick has been busy. He has been talking with the bryophyte scientists about a return visit in spring. On 13th June Alison Downing, bryophyte scientist, did an interview with Ruth Hessey on Eastside Radio in Sydney. She talks about Mt Canobolas and is also asked some personal questions about her background and study. You can listen to the podcast at https://eastsidefm.org/podcast/our-world-under-the-microscope/

Dick is also doing lots of work planning to conduct surveys to find Velvet Worms in areas around Mt Canobolas but outside the SCA.

Sandra Chrystall, an OFNCS and ECCO member, had designed a series of small nature quizzes for the ECCO stand at the Farmers Market. She thought more people in the community could be reached by having the quizzes in Orange City Life. These will be included under the OFNCS banner so keep a lookout for them.

<u>Central West Environment Council Meeting</u> 1st May 2022. Report by Nigel Hobden.

As this was my first appearance at a CWEC meeting, in May, it was more a matter of listening and finding out what is happening on the environment front across the Central West. Of which there is quite a bit, especially of a political nature. The meeting was held by Zoom, which as a newbie does make it a lot harder to engage and follow. The following are items from some of the Environment Groups that make up CWEC.

A key discussion point was the new Minister for the Environment and Heritage James Griffin, Member for Manly. Here's a chance to send key issues to the new Minister as he only has the one portfolio. You can email him at <u>officew@Griffin.minister.nsw.gov.au</u>

Inland Rivers Network: Listening to the Lachlan Conference, June 21-22: CWEC had allocated funding to assist CWEC delegates to the conference. Members were asked to consider attending and to contact Bev Smiles.

Submission: Bev Smiles will be providing a submission guide for the Darling/Barka consultation. All groups are asked to make submissions and one will be made from CWEC.

Important message for groups: We need to work together to produce a strong argument for better water management in NSW prior to the State elections in 2023.

Mudgee Environment Group: Rosemary Hadaway has expressed concern about the inadequate exhibition periods for items requiring community comment.

Healthy Rivers Dubbo: Gin Gin Weir: Mel Gray is pleased to announce that the proposal to raise the height of the Gin Gin weir is no longer current. Mel thanked the input and support from CWEC groups.

BCCAN: Bob Hill has information on how to write more effective newspaper articles. This information is available on request from Bob on email j.bhill@bigpond.com

Screening of parties /independents for environmental credentials: Bob also had information about the green credentials of Federal candidates for both upper and lower houses which could have been used by CWEC groups.

Bev suggested that a meeting be arranged between **the NCC mining group and local environmental groups** who are stakeholders in mining developments.

Mt Canobolas Update

Text by Rosemary Stapleton.

The Smiths have completed their surveys for NPWS with a report due soon. Two Greater Gliders and several Ringtail and Brushtail Possums were recorded, plus a Powerful Owl. Most importantly three transects have now been established which can be re-surveyed in future to monitor trends. Training will be held in September so OFNCS volunteers can replicate the surveys.

Redevelopments

This terrible winter weather continues to delay work on the summit. The NPWS Project Manager moved to warmer climes and has been replaced by Jen Dodson. Some people will have met Jen when she was acting ranger during the November 2019 fauna surveys.

NPWS Volunteer Program

NPWS runs a Volunteer Program, and it is quite strong in parks and reserves along the coast. These programs provide good evidence of local community involvement in protecting and enhancing these areas. Even though OFNCS members and others from Orange have done volunteer work in the past these have not been officially part of this NPWS Volunteer Program. Ranger Jack Fry is keen to formalise programs in Mt Canobolas SCA and the Borenore Karst Reserve.

The proposed volunteer programs are listed below. Each program will involve an induction and identification of a leader for each program. Equipment will be supplied by NPWS and there is a small amount of funds available each year for these programs. The hyperlinks and QR codes below take you to the application page. Please consider getting involved to help our local reserves.

Friends of Mount Canobolas SCA Volunteer Programs



- Flora and Fauna Monitoring Surveys -Mount Canobalas State Conservation Area
- Litter Collection Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area
- Stage 1 Blackberry Control Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area
- Woody Weed Removal Elderberry-Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area
- Woody Weed Removal Pine Wildlings -Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area

• Woody Weed Removal – beyond Tea House area - Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area

Friends of Borenore Karst Conservation Reserve Programs



- Graffiti Removal Borenore Karst Reserve
- Litter Collection Borenore Karst Reserve
- Weed Control Borenore Karst Reserve.

Spring Creek Bird Survey

Cilla is planning the winter survey for Saturday 31st July, weather permitting. If you are interested email orangefieldnats@gmail.com

Canobolas Conservation Alliance Update

Report by Jenny Medd.

The CCA Committee met in the last week of June to discuss recent Orange City Council (OCC) documents



with links to their Mountain Bike Project. OCC's Draft Community Strategic Plan, together with Delivery and Operational Plans, were accepted at their June Council meeting. This was despite 32 out of the 34 public submissions specifically objecting to continued consideration of the Mountain Bike Project, specifically in the Mt Canobolas SCA. These submissions generally related to the need for protection of the cultural, environmental and biodiversity heritage in the area. Thanks to those who made submissions. You can see the submissions in the OCC Business papers at https://orange.infocouncil.biz/Open/2022/06/C CL 23062022 AGN 13873 AT.PDF (p85).

The forward budget projections of \$1.5m, included in these OCC documents, have since been described as "forward planning" only, for an "unfunded project", with the project still in the "assessment phase". Further discussion both by Council and the public is expected before a "mini budget" announced for September.

The other document of concern is the **Draft Orange Region Destination Management Plan 2022-2026**, a joint proposal prepared for OCC, Blayney, and Cabonne by Urban Enterprise. Initiatives in the Plan, under "Theme 7: Nature, Cycling & Recreation", currently targets "Activating the Canobolas Precinct" to link the Mountain and the Lake, including a Skyway to the summit and summit redevelopment.

The Plan was placed on public exhibition on July 1st, with comments and/or submissions invited before a deadline of **July 29th**. It is understood that OCC is collating submissions so you don't need to make a submission to each council. OFNCS members are encouraged to register opposition to any plans to include the SCA in the construction of bike trails and the other developments mentioned. You can provide feedback at the OCC link here: https://yoursay.orange.nsw.gov.au/orange-region-destination-management-plan

A Public Forum remains on the agenda, the date still to be decided. Consideration of the timing involves not only OCC's September minibudget, but the collation of and report on submissions to the Destination Management Plan which are expected to go to the three Councils in August.

Meanwhile Orange Mountain Bike Club are progressing their trail construction in Glenwood State Forest, having obtained an additional grant to aid in the project. Most local residents would have seen the publicity for their "Trail of Awesomeness" which is due to be officially opened soon.

Listening to the Lachlan Conference, 21-22 June 2022 in Forbes – Part 1.

Text and photo Rosemary Stapleton.

What an excellent conference! The program covered a wide range of topics, and the knowledge and experience of the speakers was outstanding.

If you didn't know about the value of the Lachlan catchment or the challenges of water management beforehand you certainly did by the end of it. The concerns about raising of Wyangala Dam wall by 15m were also discussed and alternatives suggested. The conference was organised by the Wyangala Counterpoint Group to raise awareness of the issues in the Lachlan catchment.



Some of the conference participants.

We heard from many scientists, such as Professor Richard Kingsford, the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and environmental water managers, Water NSW, and Lachlan Valley Water. Farmers from both ends of the Lachlan spoke about the potential impact of the raising of the dam wall and an honours student presented on her study of the emotional impact of such a proposal. There was a talk on groundwater and also one from the Belubula Headwaters Protection Group on the potential impact on the Belubula of the proposed Regis Mine at Kings Plain. All relevant to the future health of the Lachlan catchment. Cilla spoke on the impact of inundation on River Red Gums. Chaddy, from Condobolin, showcased the amazing waterbirds of the Lachlan, with a focus on the recent breeding events in the important Mid and Lower Lachlan wetlands. The final session was short, pre-recorded presentations from a range of politicians. Unfortunately, NSW Kevin Anderson, Water Minister, and Phil Donato, member for Orange, did not send anything. Five conference resolutions were agreed to and will be circulated to politicians and participants and be available on the website.

Key messages about the Lachlan catchment were:

- The Lachlan is unique as channel size and capacity decreases as you go downstream, and a sizeable proportion is wetlands. It is the only catchment considered disconnected as it rarely flows into the Murrumbidgee. It has one of the most variable flow rates of any river.
- 30% of all colonial breeding of waterbirds in the Murray Darling Basin (MDB) occurs in the Mid and Lower Lachlan wetlands. They play a critical role as a breeding nursery for waterbirds and the whole MDB. These waterbirds provide a vital ecosystem service across the basin, such as ibis feeding

on locusts. However, evidence was presented that there is a decline in the capacity of waterbirds to respond to boom and bust water cycles and their numbers are declining.

- These RAMSAR wetlands are also a vital link for migratory species on their flight south.
- The interconnectedness of the water in the whole catchment landscape should be considered; the floodplains, creek and wetland systems, groundwater, soil carbon and water flowing across the landscape following rain.
- Diversity of habitat types across the catchment supports a significant variety of biodiversity.
- The cultural significance of the Galari to Traditional Custodians was spoken about and how it has supported the Wiradjuri people. It should be respected. Often Wiradjuri were not included in conversations or management.
- The catchment has been managed quite well in the last few years, but like most MDB rivers it is in poor condition. Sampling in some of the headwaters and small disconnected creeks has shown they are significant nursery areas for fish, including endangered species. Platypi are also found in the headwaters. There is a need to work on and protect these parts.
- The value of environmental water and the positive outcomes of it being well managed in the Lachlan was highlighted. Dr Jo Lenehan's role was emphasised in bringing people with differing views together and finding solutions. This included strategic use of the environmental water for both breeding opportunities in wet seasons and as refuges in the dry years.
- Major changes in floods at Booligal (and so in the wetlands) have occurred since the building of the Wyangala Dam. They now occur once every 7 years instead of the previous once every three years. Photos showed the loss of large areas of lignum.
- In the lower Lachlan there has been a 55% reduction in the number of floodplain river connections, a 90% increase in the duration of dry phases, more than 50% less water on the floodplain and when flooding occurs a reduced flood extent.
- Studies are being done on the biomass and carbon sequestration of the reedbeds in the lower Lachlan. Along with River Red Gums the reedbeds have declined.

- The MDB Plan will be evaluated in 2025 leading to a review in 2026, which will include updated river modelling.
- The impacts of climate change underlaid all conversations and the difficulty of using past records for predicting the future or downscaling global models was acknowledged.

After the conference I asked a few people what they thought of the two days. They said:

- 'What amazing expertise at the conference and the knowledgeable researchers were passionate about sharing their interesting research results.'
- 'Excellent conference that exposed the impact of what additional river regulation would have on the natural environment.'
- 'The thing that impressed me was that you had such a cross section of interested people and the structure meant everyone had to deliver very concisely on what they were talking about ... there was no mucking about.'

Part 2 of a report on the conference will be in the August newsletter and will cover what was discussed on the proposal to raise the Wyangala Dam wall by 15m.



Water in Lake Cowal on 23 June 2022. It is one of the important wetlands of the Lachlan.

Dates for your Diary

2022 Cowra Woodland Bird Surveys,

Dates for 2022 are 23/24 July; 15/16 October. Julian Reid is now the contact at 0405 922 505 or julian.reid@anu.edu.au

2022-2023 dates for Snipe counts are September 24, November 26, and January 14.

2022 Aussie Backyard Bird Count

17-23 October. Just 104 days until you can do 20-minute bird surveys to 'make every bird count'.

<u>Sightings around Orange</u>..... and elsewhere If you see anything interesting, please email <u>orangefieldnats@gmail.com</u> or post it on Facebook.

'Things with Wings'

Local birds.



Eastern Yellow Robin taken out in Glenwood State Forest on the mountain bike track along Boree Creek. Photo John Hansen.



Pied Butcherbird with a Three-toed Skink at Swinging Bridge Vineyards, Escort Way. Photo John Hansen.

Murray reports that he and Vicki went a little further afield. 'We spent a week in southern Queensland with three nights in St George and three in Goondiwindi. Birding highlight was a lifer - Cotton Pygmy Goose at the Buckinbah Weir near St George. Then there was a flock of 80-100 Plum-headed Finches, also in the St George area. Weather was superb 🐵. We didn't see any Bustards which was a pity but we did see Common Mynas just about everywhere and not just in the towns but along the roadsides between towns - very disappointing. Vicki took some photos of White-breasted Woodswallows on the wires near the motel in Goondiwindi and this one stands out - caption could be "Unwelcome neighbour".



"Unwelcome neighbour". Photo Vicki Fletcher.

Birds of a different kind were seen at Caragabal, west of Grenfell by the Stapletons. Go to <u>https://www.grenfell.org.au/attractions/caragab</u> <u>al-bird-art</u> to read the story of the artwork by Eggpicnic. Real Grey-crowned Babblers and Blue-faced Honeyeaters were enjoying the gorgeous flowers of some planted eucalypts.



<u>Flora</u>

The talks and surveys in the SCA have opened my eyes to bryophytes and the wet weather is certainly making it a stunning time to look for them.



This photo was taken in the Bumberry section of Goobang. Alison Downing suggested the following identification 'the erect plants

with light green leaves towards the back of the photo are probably Campylopus introflexus. The very sturdy plants with bluish leaves and pink emerging sporophytes will be Dawsonia longiseta. The prostrate, creeping moss I'm not sure, but probably in the Brachytheciaceae.'

Orchids leaves are emerging, and some species are budding up in Conimbla and Goobang National Parks and Mt Canobolas SCA. Early flowers of *Acianthus collinus*, the Hooded Mosquito Orchid, were out in the Bumberry Section of Goobang.

Acacias – photos Rosemary Stapleton.

A range of different flowering Acacias were seen by the Stapletons on trips around the slopes on the long weekend.

Along the Parkes Road to the Bumberry Section of Goobang National Park there were these bright yellow wattles. Col has suggested they are 'Woolly Wattle', Acacia lanigera (below). This is the tall, larger leafed form that occurs to the west of Orange. Plants in the Mullion Range and to the east on the tablelands are much smaller with shorter leaves.'



Within the National Park the *A.mollifolia* was just coming out and the many plants of *A. paradoxa* will be very showy in coming weeks.

Bent-leaf wattles, *A. flexifolia*, were out west of Grenfell. Between Grenfell and Cowra, it was the paler and spikey *A. genistifolia* (below).



Another species, *A. meiantha*, will be one of the threatened plants featured in the OFNCS August talk. In September we'll be going to the North Mullion area for the September excursion to look at the effect of a control burn on the *A. meiantha*.

<u>Creature of the Month</u> - Varroa Mite By Murray Fletcher.

The European honey bee is critical for many high value horticultural crops in Australia. Many beekeepers (The Beekeepers Inn at Vittoria is a good example) generate most of their income by providing pollination services to orchardists rather than through honey production. In particular, without European honey bees, Australia would produce no almonds and few avocadoes.

Any threat to the beekeeping industry is therefore also a threat to those horticultural industries. There are two main mite parasites which affect honeybees in almost every other beekeeping country in the world but, through good quarantine practices, these have been kept out of Australia until now. The practice of importing (and exporting) queen bees helps to maintain the genetic diversity of the industry and Australia's freedom from these mite pests makes us a popular source of live queen bees, another source of income for Australian beekeepers.

The two mites are the Bee Tracheal Mite, Acarapis woodi (Figure 1), and the Varroa mites (two species of the genus Varroa) (Figure 2). Acarapis woodi lives inside the breathing tubes (tracheae) blocking oxygen supply to adult bees. An infestation of this species is hard to detect. Foreign queens imported to Australia are shipped in small cages with ten worker bees to look after them during the journey. On arrival, the workers are replaced with local workers and the original workers are then dissected to remove the main tracheae for examination under the microscope. If their tracheae are clean, the queens are allowed into the country but, if not, she and her attendant workers are destroyed.

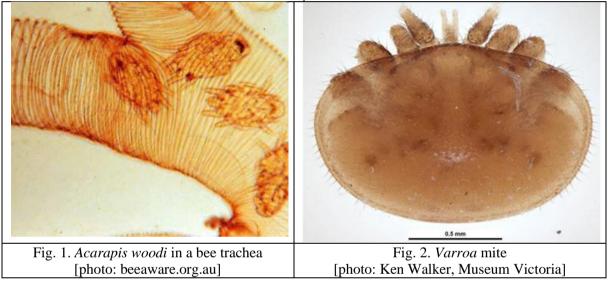
Varroa mites, on the other hand, are external parasites and are easy to see, particularly under a microscope. The same attendant worker bees examined for tracheal mites are also examined for *Varroa*. The main impact of *Varroa* is to feed on developing larvae and pupae in the hive and this causes death and deformities to the

young bees which usually results in hive collapse. *Varroa* are also known to carry bee viruses. It is worth noting that both mite pests are parasites of the European honey bee and are not expected to spread to native bees.

The use of sentinel hives around ports and airports is a deliberate ploy to monitor for these mites. The sentinel hives are regularly checked for hive health and for the presence of exotic organisms, particularly *Varroa* mites. It was in sentinel hives around Newcastle where *Varroa* mites were recently discovered. This triggered a well-planned quarantine response to try to eradicate the mites. A 10km eradication zone was established and all hives and associated equipment are being destroyed in that zone. A 20km surveillance zone and a 50km quarantine zone have also been established around

Newcastle and no movement of hives or bees is now allowed into or out of those zones. Movement within the zones is also highly controlled, although flood threats are complicating this. *Varroa* mite infestations have now been detected at a number of additional localities within the surveillance zone and these are being added to the eradication process and the extent of the zones adjusted. Further information on the response is available at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/varroa

It is timely that the 3rd July episode of Landline on ABC TV had a segment on the *Varroa* mite incursion into Australia and you can look for that on iView.



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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