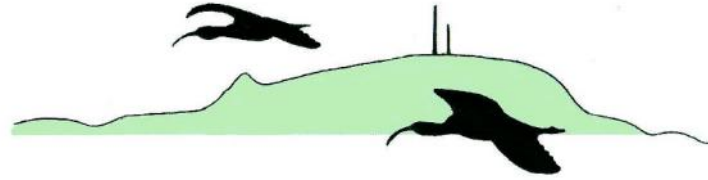


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2022

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 8th September, 7.30 pm.
Face to face at Nguluway Ngurang Senior
Citizens Centre North Room
(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

Raising a dam wall.....drowning a
woodland.

Speaker – Dr Cilla Kinross.

Excursion
Sunday 11th September
Healeys Road, Gooloogong

Next Meeting – Thursday 8th September,
7.30 pm. Raising a dam wall.....drowning a
woodland.

Speaker – Dr Cilla Kinross, Adjunct Lecturer,
Environmental Management, CSU.

The raising of Wyangala Dam will lead not only to the inundation of valuable farmland, but also to the drowning of or disturbance to 1692 ha of native vegetation, falling into two main categories: federal and state-threatened ecosystems, such as box gum woodland as well as river red gum woodland (below) of great cultural significance to both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of the Lachlan Valley.



Red gum woodland at Reids Flat that will be flooded. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Potential environmental impacts include the loss of threatened, migratory and other flora and fauna and unpredictable changes to the hydrology and ecology of the catchment.

Please be Covid safe and wear a mask and do not attend if you have been unwell in the last week or a close contact.

Next Excursion – Sunday 11th September.
Healeys Road, Gooloogong.

After the July excursion those of us who participated decided a return visit in the spring would be a good idea. We will explore both sides of the creek not just the southern slope that we walked before. Hopefully the Forest Germander, *Teucrium corymbosum*, will be flowering.

Meet at Orange High School Bus Bay at 9.00 am. This will be a full day excursion with little access to toilets, other than at Gooloogong on the way down. Bring morning tea and lunch. Wear sturdy footwear and long pants as there will be some uneven ground and steep slopes. We will aim to leave the site by 3.00 pm.

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. It is up to the driver and passengers to agree on carpooling and whether masks need to be worn.

Last Talk: Saving Our Threatened Plants in the Central West.

Speaker – Terry Mazzer, Senior Threatened Species Officer, Department of Planning and Environment, Dubbo.

Report by Dick Medd, photos from Terry Mazzer's presentation.

From the comfort of his home in Dubbo Terry Mazzer was able to Zoom us around six threatened plant species. In NSW there are 1,043 species gazetted as threatened and Terry

is the Accounting Officer for 35 of these occurring in the north west of the state. He singled out six plant species under the Saving our Species Program which occur locally or nearby to overview: the shrub *Prostanthera gilesii*, Giles Mintbush; *Eucalyptus canobolensis*, Silver-leaf Candlebark, a tree; *Trachymene scapigera*, Mountain Trachymene, a forb; *Indigofera efoliata*, Leafless Indigo, a straggly shrub recently rediscovered; *Acacia meiantha*, Barradambang Wattle, a suckering shrub; and the small aromatic shrub, *Zieria obcordata*, Granite Zieria.



Terry Mazzer (left) monitoring *E. canobolensis* in May 2019 just after the fire.

Terry explained why each of these species is threatened with extinction, whether through extremely small populations e.g., *Prostanthera* and *Indigofera* or fragmented disjunct populations in non-conservation lands e.g., the *Zieria* and *Acacia*. The *Trachymene* is restricted to highly specialised riparian habitats and has limited geographic distribution to the east of Oberon.



Trachymene scapigera, Mountain Trachymene, and an insert of its flower head.

E. canobolensis is confined to a single geographic location, occurring only on the Mount Canobolas Volcanic footprint. Each are exposed to various threats including damage from feral animals, especially pigs, or weed incursions, especially blackberries, or feral pines in relation to the *Acacia* and

Trachymene. Inappropriate fire regimes of frequent intense fires particularly threaten the *Prostanthera* and *Acacia*, in contrast to stimulating seedling recruitment in *E. canobolensis*. Increasing temperatures and aridity under climate change appears to be currently affecting *Zieria*, and *Trachymene* and threatens *E. canobolensis* which is confined to high altitudes.

Peculiarities of their biology and ecology not only play a part in their vulnerability but add to the challenges of monitoring and saving these species. Clonal reproduction in *Prostanthera*, *Acacia* and *Trachymene* makes identifying individual plants extremely difficult, confounding temporal trends in population numbers. Unknowns in reproductive biology surround the *Indigofera* and *Prostanthera* whereas lack of seedling recruitment in the *Zieria* is perplexing. Where possible seed is being actively collected and deposited in the Australian PlantBank and/or grown on in nurseries for reintroduction or possible translocation, whereas for other species cuttings are being maintained at the Royal Botanic Gardens Mt Annan and elsewhere. In addition to monitoring, some species and sites are also being actively managed to mitigate threats. A novel scent-decoy technique is being researched for dissuading browsers of the *Zieria* as well as the use of exclusion fencing for this species.



Zieria obcordata, Granite Zieria, being enjoyed by browsers.

Species distributed across various sites also presents challenges of liaising with multiple agencies and land managers. In most of the species, limited genetic diversity is also a concern and hopefully will be investigated with further research.

Terry's presentation gave an informative insight into the Saving our Species Program and the diversity of issues and challenges faced in ensuring their survival into the future. It

stimulated a wide-ranging number of questions, indicative of the audience appreciation and thirst for understanding. Thank you Terry, and your organisation, for a most interesting and informative presentation.

Last Excursion: Sunday 11th September

Report by Rosemary Stapleton.

The lesson for the excursion on the damp and foggy morning was plain to see on the Orange High School noticeboard near the bus bay. It was *'Every accomplishment starts with a decision to try'*. Would my accomplishment be a day at Bumberry and would anyone else make the decision to come and try it with me? Parked there with the engine running and the heater on I was ready to pull the pin when an unfamiliar car drove in. It was new member Helen Croke! How could I say no to her enthusiasm? NPWS Ranger Jack had sent a message saying he was on his way and then Nigel turned up. There was no debate about what to do so we headed out. We had the regular stop at Manildra where there were patches of blue sky. It was warm drinks from the café for some and a breakfast snack for others.

We decided to walk along the old road on the northern side of Henry Parkes Way. Nigel had his drizabone, Jack his NPWS gear and Helen and I had coats and umbrellas. I was so sure no-one would come that I hadn't even thought of wet weather gear. The scene that met us was a mass of white of flowering *Leucopogon attenuatus*, Beard Heath, the bright yellow of *Acacia paradoxa* and the vivid green of carpets of moss, some with a spikey covering of dense sporophytes.



Jack, Helen, and Nigel looking at the flowering shrubs, Bumberry. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

We saw our first *Diplodinium clavigerum*, the Dwarf Greenhood (formerly *Pterostylis nana*) not realising that we would see many more

patches of them throughout the bush. The leaves of the orchids we usually see here were scattered around with the *Pterostylis plumosa* or Bearded Greenhood rosettes being the only ones showing flower spikes. One patch of broad smooth long leaves were lying on the ground as if cut off with scissors. Nigel thought they hadn't been chewed off, so we wondered if they had rotted at their base because of the wet conditions.

Occasional shrubs were flowering including *Grevillea floribunda*, several *Ericas*, red flowered *Melichrus*, *Mycromyrtus ciliata* and one with very tiny yellow flowers. The Ironbarks were flowering but Jack and Helen became fascinated by the evidence of past logging activities and how the trees had survived by sending out basal shoots. The logging had occurred a long time ago as some of the shoots were now quite large.



An Ironbark that survived logging by producing basal shoots. Photo Jack Fry.

While Jack walked the length of the old road the rest of us meandered along. Helen spotted the first spring orchid flower, a tiny China Blue Orchid, *Caladenia caerulea*. The birds were very quiet although when the showers stopped, I heard Brown Honeyeaters, a Spotted Pardalote and a Grey Fantail flitted around. One Grey Butcherbird was all fluffed up and feeling the cold.

Every now and then it showered so our umbrellas came out, but the rain wasn't heavy

enough to deter us. The rocky embankments were covered in many different moss and lichen species with emerging spore structures and even a few liverworts.



Rosemary, Helen, and Jack looking at the bryophytes (see photo last page) on a rocky embankment. Photo Nigel Hobden.

We were happy with Jack's next suggestion of exploring a track that ran north and the calls of White-winged Choughs accompanied us. We followed this track to an old logger's rubbish dump around a large old Ironbark. There were many rusted beer cans that were making music as the raindrops from the tree fell on them. In a damp area the heath was thick, and Nigel spotted the first purple flower of a *Damperia*. His good eyes also found a weird fungus structure emerging from the soil. We had lost track of time looking at the wealth of nature that was around us as it was almost one o'clock and we decided to head back. It was a good decision as the showers started again.

As I hadn't packed lunch, thinking no-one would come, others grabbed a bite to eat and Nigel, Helen and I walked up the Staircase Trail a few 100 metres to the spinifex and shrub area. Jack stayed behind and picked up some of the vast amount of rubbish that had been dropped at the roadside parking area. Again, the *Leucopogons* were dense patches of white and there were several shades of yellow from different *Acacia* species. The purple flowers of *Damperia* were found and we were surprised to see the first of the flowers of a *Prostanthera* and the first yellow flowers of *Hibbertia*. We didn't stay long which was just as well as the drive back to Manildra was in very heavy rain.

Our decision to try certainly accomplished a very enjoyable day exploring. It must have been worthwhile as Helen said she had enjoyed herself and would definitely be coming again. If we ever get a sunny warm day in about a month it would be worth visiting this area of

Goobang National Park as many of the shrubs and orchids will be flowering.



Prostanthera shrubs were just starting to flower. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Bumberry Bird List	
White-throated Treecreeper	White-winged Chough
Eastern Robin	Yellow Grey Fantail
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Noisy Friarbird
Brown Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird
Spotted Pardalote	Grey Butcherbird
Australian Raven	Pied Currawong

OFNCS Committee News

At the August meeting updates were given by Dick Medd on the proposed surveys for velvet worms in the state forests surrounding the SCA. Due to all the requirements of Forestry NSW, it was agreed these surveys would be by invitation. For other surveys and excursions in National Parks and reserves the NPWS now require groups to make an application for a 'small event'. This has been completed and approved for OFNCS activities for the rest of 2022. Training for establishing and conducting surveys of arboreal mammals will be held in early September. The bryophyte scientists are also looking to return in October or November.

OFNCS have agreed to write to the NSW Scientific Committee in support of the increase in the threat status of *Eucalyptus canobolensis*. A letter has also been written to Uncle Neil

Ingram in support of the dual naming of Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas.

Mt Canobolas Update

Text by Rosemary Stapleton.

All the winter moods on the mountain have been on display in recent weeks. Visitors on Saturday 13th August experienced low cloud rolling down from the summit, brilliant sunshine and an eerie still before a hailstorm and rain. And all within about 40 minutes! The variation in weather continued with snow on Tuesday 23rd August.



Winter wonderland at The Walls Picnic Area. Photo Cabonne Council Facebook page.

It was pleasing to see that Orange City Council voted to support an application for the dual naming of Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas. Similar support has also been given by Cabonne Council and Orange Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Work on the summit redevelopment will start again on 5th September hoping that the weather will improve with spring.

Canobolas Conservation Alliance Update

Report by Jenny Medd.

The previous month has been a quiet time for the CCA Committee, with no formal meeting held while we continue to wait for decisions from Orange City Council, with the mini-budget due to be debated in September.



President, Andrew Rawson, has been liaising with Greens MPs on a range of topics, including the lack of action on the AOBV nomination, the NPWS Biking Strategy, and Indigenous Heritage issues. Dual naming of the mountain looks set to be widely adopted locally, with a formal application to the Geographical Names Board to go ahead.

The CCA Committee is aware of other proposed mountain trail bike developments,

both within NSW and in other States, which are causing similar concerns to those we face, and will continue to liaise whenever possible.

It has been encouraging to read Nick King's continuing contributions in the print media, which support our broader agenda and keep important environmental issues in the public's eyes. The work of OFNCS stalwart, Dick Medd, in engaging the scientific community in studies on Mt Canobolas, is also very keenly appreciated.

Hopefully, we will soon know whether our campaign against a mountain bike network in the SCA has been successful, or whether the protection of this remaining biodiverse landscape calls for an even greater fight.

FALCONCAM - Kerfuffle in the water tower. Report and photo from Cilla Kinross.

The very day before Diamond laid her first egg at 0714 on 26th August (mother and egg doing well, thank you), we had what I think was a strange female Peregrine Falcon disturbing the pair on the water tower. While the mother-to-be should have been resting, tended to by her faithful male, Xavier, she was tearing around chasing an intruder. Of course, it was possible that it was an offspring from previous years, but unwelcome at any rate, especially at such a 'delicate' time. To see if another egg has been laid or for further information and videos, head to the FalconCam Project, Orange.



Diamond's reaction to the intruder.

Dates for your Diary

Tree planting for Biodiversity Month with Summer Hill Creekecare and Charles Sturt University.

Sunday 25th September, 9.30 am until noon, refreshments/light lunch provided.

At Risky Paddock, Clifton Grove, Charles Sturt University. Corner of Banjo Paterson Way and Ophir Road. Please register interest with details and emergency contact with **Cilla Kinross** ckinross@csu.edu.au 6365 7651.

2022 Cowra Woodland Bird Surveys,

Dates for 2022 are 15/16 October. Contact Julian Reid on **0405 922 505** or at julianr@homemail.com

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

2022 Aussie Backyard Bird Count

17-23 October. You can do 20-minute bird surveys to 'make every bird count'. [Click to get details.](#)

2022 NCC Annual Conference

Saturday 5th November. Sydney and online.

[Find more information and register here.](#)

Wellington Caves fossils help confirm only known vulture species from Australia

Jenny Medd suggested the following article from the Central Western Daily (July 28, 2022, Author/By-line: Ciara Bastow) may be of interest. It is reproduced in full.

Wellington Caves has become part of history as the source of several new fossils that palaeontologists were able to identify as belonging to *Cryptogyps lacertosus*, an extinct genus of vulture. After first being classified as an eagle more than 100 years ago, a new discovery by Flinders University and South Australian Museum palaeontology experts has uncovered Australia's first vulture species; *Cryptogyps lacertosus*. Vultures are birds of prey that feed almost exclusively on decaying flesh.

Lead author Dr Ellen Mather, from the Flinders University palaeontology research lab said the fossils has been kept in a collection at the Australian Museum since 1976, when they were donated, until they were "kindly" loaned to her and her colleagues for the purpose of their research. Unfortunately, Dr Mather doesn't know what cave system the fossils were found in. "These fossils are part of what is known as the 'Old Collection' of the Australian Museum, a large number of fossils that were collected between 1884 and 1917 when the NSW Department of Mines was responsible for the caves," she said. "Whoever originally

collected them did not leave a record of where they were found, which is very annoying for us scientists."

The Wellington fossils included two fragments of distal humeri, the end of the upper arm bone that connects to the elbow, which is identical to the original fossil from the Warburton River that the species was described on. "This confirmed that *Cryptogyps lacertosus* was actually present in the fossil assemblage," she said.

This is the first time one of these scavenging raptors has been found to have lived in Australia. More importantly, these bones allowed the researchers to connect the third fossil, a tarsus (lower leg bone in birds that connects to the foot), to the species, as it was both the right size and could be definitively ruled out as any living eagle. "This tarsus was critical to identifying *Cryptogyps* as a vulture, as it has similar characteristics to other species still alive today," she said.

Finding these fossils in Wellington Caves "definitely" means the species would have resided round the Wellington area. "In fact, evidence suggests *Cryptogyps lacertosus* was widespread across Australia, much like the Wedge-tailed Eagle today," she said. "There is at least one fossil known from caves in the Nullarbor Plains of Western Australia, and the first fossil found in 1905 came from northern South Australia."

Dr Mather said it was "thrilling" to confirm the first vulture species using the fossils from Wellington Caves. "Other palaeontologists had previously suggested that this species, originally described as an eagle, was actually a vulture," she said. "Our research wanted to definitively determine if this was the case through rigorous comparisons and analyses.

"So to have the evidence from the Wellington Caves fossils right in front of our eyes was very exciting, and even more so when our results supported the vulture identity."

Whilst now extinct, *Cryptogyps lacertosus* would have existed alongside Diprotodon.

At this point in time, there isn't enough of the skeleton to know exactly what *Cryptogyps lacertosus* looked like, or what it ate. Gaining this information will require more discoveries in the future.

Sightings around Orange

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

Reptiles

Stumpy Tail seen beside the Falls path in late July by John Zimmer.



Copperhead Snake sunning itself at Ploughmans Wetland spotted by Rosemary. Its home had probably been inundated by the high water level in the wetland following all the rain on 4th August. It came back to around the same spot for the next 3 days. Jake Hansen commented ‘*They’re arguably the most cold tolerant species of snake in Australia and this certainly helps bolster that claim*’.



‘Things with Wings’

Diamond Firetails – a pair seen by Cilla in her garden on 5th August. She hopes they breed there again.



Buff-banded Rail – photographed by Nigel in the Orange Botanic Gardens where it appears to feed with the Dusky Moorhens. Apparently, it has been spotted occasionally in the gardens over the last few months.



Unlike the orchids Col Bower has noticed lots of bird activity on his daily walk with his dog. *‘It has been noticeable that the Yellow-faced Honeyeaters have returned and there are Striated and Brown Thornbills moving through. Yesterday and today (27/28 August) I observed a male Spotted Pardalote setting up a territory along the creek – yesterday he was calling madly out in the open, and today he was going in and out of a nest hole in the creek bank. I fear the nest will be flooded the next time we have heavy rain. There has also been an unusually high level of Pied Currawong activity all winter and today 50 odd were carolling in the treetops. A pair of Galahs is nesting in a large Ribbon Gum as well.’*

And Rosemary has noticed Magpie’s nesting in the poplars at Ploughmans wetland.

Flora

Nodding Greenhood (*Pterostylis nutans*) – one flower spotted among the snow grass on Mt Canobolas.

Col Bower ventured out to the archery range but didn’t find any orchid flowers. He suggested ‘it has been such a miserable cold season that plant development seems to be delayed. Nevertheless, there is a brilliant flowering of wattles this year.’

Spring has sprung at Conimbla NP and Healey’s Road.

Ruth Workman, from Healey’s Road and friend of Tracee Burke has been out and about in the Conimbla Ranges. On a track near the Ironbark Track in Conimbla National Park Ruth spotted several flowering shrubs

including *Prostanthera*, *Phyllanthus occidentalis*, the *Boronia* below and a flower of the orchid *Bunochilus stenosepalus* [syn. *Pterostylis stenosepala*].



Possibly *Boronia glabra*.

And just this weekend when walking along Healey's Road Ruth spotted her first *Diuris* orchid flower for the spring, some *Caladenia caerulea* and *C. fuscata*. She also managed to get great photos of *Chiloglottis trapeziformis* with a pollinator (below) which Col has identified as 'the pollinator, *Neozeleboria cryptoides*, a very common little wasp'.



Creature of the Month

Templetonia stenophylla, Leafy Templetonia.
Contributed by R. & J. Medd.

Templetonia is a lesser-known genus of pea flowers that may well once have been very common but is now rarely seen due to habitat loss. Of the 4 species described in PlantNET, 3 occur in the west and south-west of NSW, with only one, ***Templetonia stenophylla***

(Leafy Templetonia) occurring all along the Tablelands and western slopes. This species, endemic to eastern Australia, actually ranges from south-eastern Queensland, down through Victoria and into South Australia.

Being a small straggling sub-shrub, typically growing as a wiry, prostrate plant, it is easily overlooked, and a bit like orchids, it really does need to be in flower to be spotted! Watch out for it right now as it usually flowers late winter and early spring. *Templetonia stenophylla* is worth searching for, despite rarely featuring in published guides. Part of the Fabaceae Family, it is of significant value in the environment, being a legume that helps fix nitrogen in the soil.



Known regional locations include Bumberry, Cudal, Canowindra, Cumnock, Mt Arthur, Burrendong Arboretum (growing naturally in grassy woodland near the threatened *Swainsona recta*), Molong, near Bathurst, Duramana, Clandulla, Fern Tree Gully, and Windeyer, as well as in remnant vegetation in cemeteries like Garra and Toogong.



Templetonia stenophylla, Leafy Templetonia (*stenophylla* from the Greek meaning 'narrow leaves')

Limited information and many more photographs can be found on-line at:

- <https://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=sp&name=Templetonia~stenophylla>
- <https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://id.biodiversity.org.au/node/apni/2901493>

- <https://vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au/flora/taxon/166efcbc-fdbe-4627-9153-4ab8aa5b7006>
- http://www.flora.sa.gov.au/cgi-bin/speciesfacts_display.cgi?form=speciesfacts&name=Templetonia_stenophylla
- https://apps.lucidcentral.org/plants_se_nsw/text/entities/templetonia_stenophylla.htm



Species diversity on a rock embankment at the Bumberry section of Goobang National Park. Note the red sexual reproductive structures of the lichen which are called apothecia. Photo Nigel Hobden.

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.

EFT payments to: BSB 802 129: Account 100014678: O F N & Cons Soc Inc.

Please be sure to identify payments with your name and send confirmation to orangefieldnats@gmail.com

Subscription rates:

Single member – \$25

Concession rate (emailed newsletters) – \$12.50

Each additional family member – \$5

Concession rate (printed newsletters) – \$25

Note: concession rate is for *bona fide* pensioners and students only

This Newsletter is produced for OFNCS by the Editor, Rosemary Stapleton. Views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Society. Items should not be reproduced without permission of the Editor.

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.

Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society, PO Box 369, Orange, 2800
orangefieldnats@gmail.com

www.orangefieldnats.com

www.facebook.com/ofnacs/