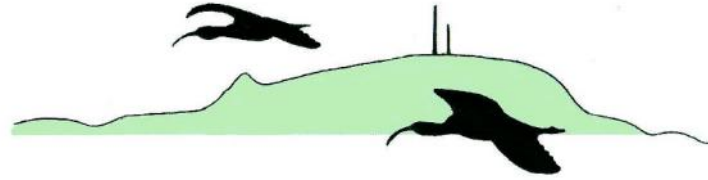


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER APRIL 2023

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 13th April, 7.30 pm.

Floods, drought, and the circle of life at the Wellington Caves.

Speaker - Ian Eddison, Former Caves Engagement Officer, Wellington Caves.

Face to face at Nguluway Ngurang Senior Citizens Centre North Room
(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

Committee Meeting

Thursday 13th April, 6.30 pm.

Excursion

Sunday 16th April 9.00am.

**Mingham Springs, Mandagery Reserve
west of Cudal**

2023 Membership is now due. No change was made to the membership fees at the AGM. Details of the fees and payment methods are at the end of the newsletter. Thanks to those members who have already paid.

Next Meeting – Thursday 13th April, 7.30 pm. Floods, drought, and the circle of life at the Wellington Caves.

Speaker - Ian Eddison, Former Caves Engagement Officer, Wellington Caves.
President, Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association.

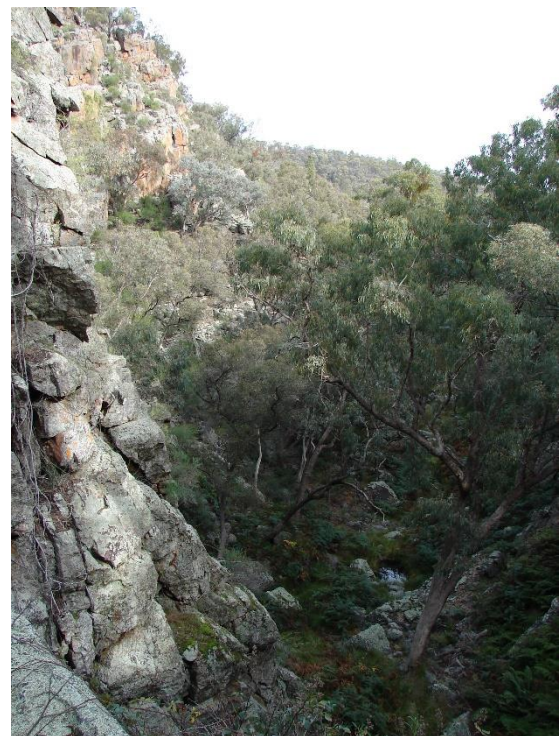
Ian will talk about the cycle of life at the Wellington Caves over the 2016 - 2021 period. From the floods of 2016 through to the drought of 2019, the dust storms and the perilous life for wildlife. The harsh times of the drought had an impact and Ian will look at the effects of returning rains, the subsequent regrowth of vegetation and the life that came from that abundance of food.

These 5 years are only a blink of the eye in time. Ian will reflect on the likely effects of human induced climate change, of a warming planet and extreme weather events that we are being told of. He surmises that if this is correct,

the flora and fauna that can respond the quickest when favourable conditions occur will continue to flourish and the species slow to respond may well be on a perilous path of survival.

Next Excursion – Sunday 16th April, 9am. Mingham Springs, Mandagery precinct of the South West Woodlands Nature Reserve.

As Nangar National Park is closed the excursion will be to Mandagery Reserve, west of Cudal. However, the rain in the last week may have made the tracks in the reserve impassable. A final decision on the location of the excursion will be made a few days beforehand and an email will be sent around.



Mingham Springs Gorge on an OFNCS excursion on 14 July 2008.

Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Mandagery Reserve was previously a state forest and became part of the reserve system on 1 January 2011. The 1,514 ha reserve is dry open-forest on the lower slopes of the Hervey

Ranges and Mugga Ironbark Woodland on the hills. There has not been a fire in the reserve for a considerable time.

Mingham Springs, on Crown Land to the west, is a gorge that contains fern species at their western limit. We will walk to the top of the gorge and look down on the ferns. The last few months have been very dry so we may not see any autumn flowering orchids.

Meet at 9.00am at Orange High Bus Bay.

This will be a full day excursion so bring morning tea and lunch. Please wear sturdy footwear, long sleeve shirts and pants. The tracks within the reserve are not used often so we may need to walk a way to the top of the gorge. 4WD drive is needed. Car-pooling will be arranged at the bus bay.

At the meeting and on the excursion 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 Meeting – Thursday 9th March.

Bush safety and use of technology.

Speaker Geoff Selwood, Rural Fire Service.

Most people who came to the meeting had downloaded the Avenza app and Geoff took us through how to use it. A map of the area around the RFS building was emailed to everyone. After uploading it he took us on a walk around the outside of the RFS building. Most people managed to see their track and place a pin on the map. For a few of us we realised we needed to do a little more experimenting! Geoff has downloaded the Avenza Map Guidelines, which are included with the newsletter.

Geoff explained how the **Emergency plus app** would allow us to find and share our location in an emergency even if out of mobile range. He suggested we should also download the new Hazards Near Me app. This app allows you to add ‘Watch Zones’ to receive alerts about fires and floods and monitor the status of them across the state.

Last Excursion – Sunday 12th March.

Putting bush safety into practice, Kinross State Forest, with Geoff Selwood.

The expression you could have heard a pin drop didn't apply as we gathered at a road junction in the cleared area of Kinross State

Forest. There were lots of questions, discussion and pins being dropped on our location in Google maps as we followed Geoff's instructions. We also shared the location with someone else. This simple skill can be used if you need to alert someone to your location.

Everyone had downloaded the Avenza app that Geoff had introduced us to on Thursday night. Hai and Cath had already used it successfully on their excursions on Saturday. Tony had managed to master the downloading of maps for much of the country as had Nigel. Some of us had less luck and my phone just wouldn't allow me to play even though the app had worked earlier in the week. The finer points of adding waypoints, attaching pictures and defining routes were discussed. Tony put together a visual of the process, which is attached.

There was also advice on how to download ‘Get Lost’ maps for the Avenza app. Not maps with wrong directions but maps to use on the app to help with navigation. Nigel gave good advice and suggested that while phones were a helpful tool they should not be relied upon. His own experience of getting bogged and having his phone develop problems was a good lesson for him. He suggested that looking around your location to get a sense of the landscape helped with navigation without a phone. Other tips on finding the compass points were shared and Sandra and Glen even said they travel with a compass in their backpack.



Discussing the Avenza app, Kinross State Forest. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

After walking around in the sun in the cleared desert of the logged area we decided to try using the app under trees in the native part of the forest. This called for a morning tea break. A short stroll up one of the fire trails showed that Avenza still worked under the trees where links to satellites might have been restricted. Nigel and Ken headed down the slope and on

return commented how dry it was. The birds were very quiet although the pardalotes started calling as we walked back to the cars.

I think the conclusion of the morning was that the Avenza app would be very helpful when out in the bush as it easily marked the route we had taken. It would also allow marking of finds and make returning to these finds easy. I suspect those who will be travelling soon will make good use of it on their wanders. Thanks Geoff for sharing this information with us so we will be safer when out in the bush, especially in unfamiliar areas.

Birds seen or heard were Australian Magpie, White-throated Treecreeper, Grey Fantail, Striated and Spotted Pardalote. Birds moving too quickly for identification may have been a robin and some thornbills.

OFNCS Committee News

Future surveys of Greater Gliders and velvet worms have been the focus of some of the committee. Other than the Glider Training (see report below) Dick Medd has helped NPWS Ranger Jack Fry write an Animal Ethics Application for surveys of gliders in the Mt Canobolas SCA over the next 5 years.

Sites to conduct velvet worms surveys, in areas adjacent to the SCA have also been investigated.

We welcome new member Rebecca Heins. Rebecca is a keen birder who hopes to join Cilla at the Spring Creek Survey planned for Easter Monday 10th April.

Glider Training Report

By Richard Medd, photos Helmut Berndt.

Ten enthusiastic members volunteered for training on how to set out and monitor fixed transects for systematically recording arboreal mammals. Kindly tutored by Drs Judy and Peter Smith, the training first involved an outline for establishing transects and recording a range of observations about habitat. To set this into practice during the afternoon session, a new transect was established along a walking track at Federal Falls.

Why the training? Well, Mt Canobolas is home to a small colony of Greater Gliders which are isolated in the cleared landscape. Greater Gliders are listed nationally as endangered, so the population on the mountain, being disjunct

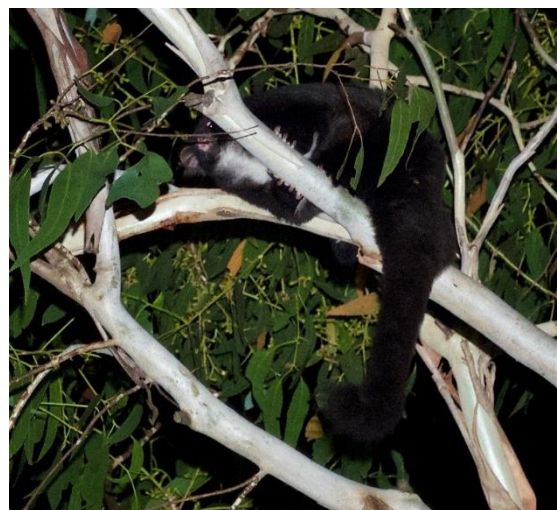
and small, is particularly vulnerable. Greater Gliders have been declining elsewhere due to habitat loss, fire and climate change. They are cold climate animals, quite sensitive to increasing temperatures.



Learning how to assess tree height on the new transect. Photo Helmut Berndt.

The Smiths had previously established 3 other transects for their systematic survey commissioned by NPWS last year. It is intended that OFNCS volunteers, in collaboration with NPWS, will monitor these transects over 3 nights once a year to establish a better basis for managing and protecting this special population. All data collected will be added to the NSW BioNet Atlas.

After a leisurely and convivial break for a picnic, the party split into two groups at dusk to spotlight. One group recorded the new transect, the other went out along the other trail at Federal Falls. It turned out to be quite an active night for animals. In all 4 Greater Gliders plus 2 probables were sighted, along with 9 Common Ringtail Possums, plus 1 probable Common Brushtail Possum and 1 probable Krefft's Glider.



Greater Glider seen during training. Photo Helmut Berndt.

Unlike during the excursion, a couple of weeks ago, microbat activity was barely registered, and insects were sparse other than for a few moths. Other mammal records were sightings of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Red-necked Wallabies, and a Short-beaked Echidna plus Common Wombat and Red Fox droppings and pig diggings.

Many thanks to Judy and Peter who gave freely of their time and knowledge. Our OFNCS survey group are now planning their first follow-up survey.

Following the training a group of the trainees marked out 2 new survey transects and completed the habitat assessment for them. The first annual surveys are planned for the first 2 weeks in May. These will be along the 2 new transects and 2 of the transects set up by the Smiths.



More assessing tree height as part of the habitat assessment. Photo R Stapleton.

May Talk and Excursion

Thursday 11th May – NPWS Volunteer Program with ranger Jack Fry.

Sunday 14th May – the excursion will be the LLS fungi foray on Mt Canobolas SCA. You will need to register, and the details will be circulated. Liz hopes to have them finalised by 3rd April.

Mt Canobolas Update

Hopefully the recent storm rain will have refreshed the vegetation on the mountain and stimulated some autumn flowering of orchids.

Now that the caretaker period for government is over a decision on the dual naming of Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas should be announced.

If you have been to the SCA recently you may have noticed the excellent new signage that has been erected by NPWS. At the Federal Falls Picnic Area and The Walls the animals have noticed it as well. The earth around the cement bases to the signs has been dug out, possibly by wombats. Are they seeking the salt or minerals in the cement or just investigating the freshly dug soil?



Soil dug away from the base of the signs at Federal Falls Picnic Area. Photo R Stapleton.

Nangar National Park

Nangar National Park is still closed due to damage from the November rain event. NPWS advise that it is unlikely to open until July. Please check the NPWS website and alerts before planning a visit to Nangar.

Dates for your Diary

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

Spring Creek Reservoir Bird Survey - Easter Monday 10th April. Meet at the gates of the reservoir at 8.30 am. The survey takes about 2.5 hours.

Mycology May 2023 - Fungus Connections: Biodiversity, Farming & Food.

Preliminary details from Liz Davis, CTLLS.
<https://www.trybooking.com/CERVE>

Sightings around Orange

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

Things with Wings

Hardhead and Australasian Grebes – Yvette Black spotted a Hardhead on a farm Dam at Clifton Grove and commented that a pair of Australasian Grebes had raised 3 pairs of babies there this summer.

Glossy Black Cockatoos – Cath and Rosemary Stapleton surveyed for the Glossy Black Cockatoo Count in Goobang National Park. On 11th March we sat quietly, from 5.30 pm at a tree where we had found a pair nesting in 2022. No Glossies appeared and we had just decided we would pack up at 8pm when a pair quietly flew in, the female climbed to the hollow and the male flew off. Cath captured the female (below) in the exact same position as last year. It was exciting to think that the pair were breeding again.



Above: Female Glossy at nest hollow and below, chewings of Allocasuarina. Photos Cath Stapleton.

Before setting up to watch the nest hollow we walked along a fire trail and found fresh chewings of *Allocasuarina* cones (below)possibly by the breeding pair.



Whistling Kite at Spring Creek Reservoir on 12 March, photographed by Nigel Sethack.



Musk Ducks – another family (below) photographed by Nigel Sethack at Spring Creek Reservoir on 20 March. The coots seemed to have returned there with hundreds on the water.



Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes and Fan-tailed Cuckoo - spotted by Dick Medd while we were taking a break from habitat assessments at Orange View. It was unusual to see a flock of about 12 Cuckoo-shrikes fly into the eucalypts and forage in the foliage. A number were immatures (below). They were quickly followed by a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. It seemed to be too far away from the Federal Falls Track where one had been seen earlier in the day.



An immature Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Animals

Not a local but Eric Tanner had this seal visit their camp site at Sussex Inlet on 17 March.



Natural History

Don't forget to check out the online exhibition of artwork by [Margaret Senior](#) (1917-1995), a celebrated natural history and children's book illustrator. She produced a very popular series of [National Parks and Wildlife Posters](#). Murray Fletcher emailed to say Margaret Senior also produced a series of paintings of plant diseases which were used on NSW DPI leaflets and articles in the NSW Agricultural Gazette. The originals are stored at OAI, on Forest Road.

Creatures of the Month Black and Orange Bugs.

Text and photos by Jenny Medd.

This summer has yielded a few different, eye-catching insects which I've managed to photograph. They have all been identified by the Australian Museum's "Ask an Expert" Service

1. Steel-blue Sawfly (*Perga dorsalis*)

This specimen was photographed on a cultivated *Eucalyptus nova-anglica* (New England Peppermint), which has tiny flowers. The wingspan of this insect is given as about 4cms.

It would seem that adults such as this are rarely seen, although their larvae are both numerous and highly visible. There were certainly large numbers in the Eucalypts over spring and summer this last year. The Museum's explanation was: 'Sawflies are more commonly known through their larval stage known as spitfires. They can be extremely

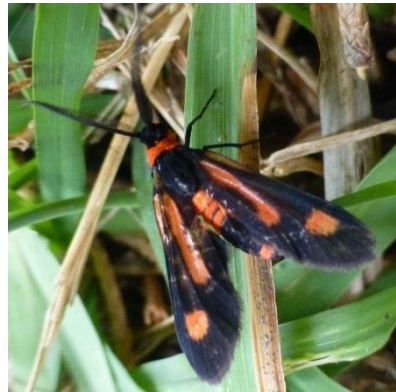
destructive to plant life but their adult forms are seen less frequently. The name comes not from the adult stage but the larval stage which is steel-blue in colour. The majority of the species in this family occur in South America and Australia. The Steel-blue Sawfly is only found in the south east corner of Australia from the Queensland/New South Wales border around to Adelaide."



The female lays her eggs in a slit she cuts between the upper and lower surfaces of a leaf of a food plant. The larvae and adults of this family are quite harmless to people. They do not sting, as their cousins the communal wasps do.

2. *Hestiochora erythrota* (Zygaenidae)

Spotted on a walk around the paddock; never seen before nor since, despite its eye-catching colours. iNaturalist comments give it as a member of the Burnet moths; one other specimen for this region was identified from Millthorpe, submitted by Brian Rosenberg.



Google searches turn up little further information other than its wingspan is roughly 2cms and the adults and larvae are warningly coloured to avoid predation. They sequester poisons such as cyanide.

3. Bottlebrush Sawfly (*Pterygophorus cinctus* Klug)

This (dead) specimen was found in the birdbath that sits adjacent to a Tom Thumb bottlebrush. Again, this one is the only specimen ever seen here; very little specific information has been located. However, an interesting article on sawflies, including mention of more than one species, can be found at:

<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/insects/sawflies/>



Morning tea at Kinross State Forest. L to R - Penny Todman, Sandra Chrystall, Ken Mills, Geoff Selwood, Glen Griffiths, Cath Stapleton, Tony Caine, John Zimmer, Nigel Hobden and Hai Wu. 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.

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/ofncs/