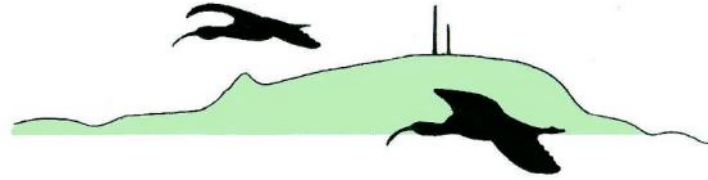


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2023

NEXT MEETING

**Thursday 9th February, 7.30 pm.
Annual General Meeting followed by Show
and Tell from members**

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

**Committee Meeting
Thursday 9th February, 6.30 pm.**

**Excursion
Sunday 12th February, 7.00pm.
Picnic at Orange View, Mt Canobolas SCA
followed by spotlighting at Watts Pinnacle**

**Annual General Meeting
Thursday 9th February, 7.30 pm.**

Come to the AGM to hear President Geoff's 2022 report. All positions will be declared vacant so please think about nominating or becoming a member of the general committee. The AGM will be followed by a '2022 Show and Tell' PowerPoint of members' photos.

If you wish to show any of your photos taken in 2022 you can send up to 6 to the OFNCS email address. Please include the photographer's name, the subject of each photo and the location where it was taken. By sending images you agree to them being placed on the OFNCS website and used on our Facebook page. You will be acknowledged appropriately.

**Next Excursion – 12th February 7.00 pm
Picnic at Orange View, Mt Canobolas SCA
followed by spotlighting in the Crown Land
at Watts Pinnacle adjacent to the SCA.**

Come and discover some of the things there are to love about the mountain environment. This year we will **meet and picnic at the Orange View lookout**. At dusk those wishing to do spotlighting will be ferried to the eastern entrance of the Fern Gully Track. This is Crown Land, and we will walk north along the

track beside Watts Pinnacle. In December visitors to Orange, Evan and Fiona, spotted a Ringtail Possum, Greater Glider and a family of Tawny Frogmouths along this track. Spotlights will be available but please bring your own torch or headlamp.

BYO everything – food, drink, utensils, chairs and torches or headlamps. Please wear sturdy footwear, long sleeve shirts and pants and insect repellent. A jumper might be a good idea if the weather is cool. If the weather is stormy the excursion will not go ahead.

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.



*Common Ringtail Possum, Fern Gully Trail.
Photo Evan Hallein.*

**Last Excursion – Sunday 11th December,
Wambool Nature Reserve.
Report and photos by Nigel Hobden.**

Wambool Nature Reserve (NR) was established on 12 June 1987 and is 194 hectares in area. The significance of Wambool relates to its unusual geology on the edge of the Bathurst Plains, where the granites of the Bathurst Batholith give way to Silurian sediments. The reserve ranges from 800m to 965m at the Yetholme Geodetic Trig Station in the northern part of the reserve.

Wambool NR vegetation is dominated by stunted gum trees, including Western or Inland Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus rossii*). Two vegetation communities have been described for the reserve: Inland Scribbly Gum and Brittle Gum (*E. mannifera*) covering 70% of the reserve and the second being Long Leaved Box (*E. goniocaylix*), Scribbly Gum and Brittle Gum covering 27% of the reserve. The woodlands in the NR generally have poor conservation status in NSW and are considered vulnerable and inadequately conserved. The low shrub density of the woodlands allows this niche to be filled by terrestrial orchids. The reserve is considered to be an orchid hotspot, with 48 species from 17 genera being recorded.

We commenced our walk at the second locked gate on Timber Ridge Road at the Wambool Trail head. Immediately we spotted lovely *Stylidium graminifolium*, the Grass Triggerplant, with flower spikes up to 500mm in height. The trail took us up a slight rise until the junction of the Wambool and Geebung Trail. We then turned south along the Geebung Trail. It wasn't long before we spotted clusters of fertilised flower spikes of *Thelymitra sp.* (Sun Orchid) and *Calochilus sp.* (Bearded Orchid). In areas the ground was carpeted in the yellow flowers of *Goodenia sp.*



A carpet of Goodenia at Wambool NR.

Soon after along the Geebung Trail we found our first orchid in flower the *Thelymitra carnea* (Tiny Sun Orchid). These Sun Orchids are both

tiny in stature and in the flower size. We did find some of 'Nigel's Lawn Orchid' (*Microtis unifolia*). I currently have over 100 flower spikes of *Microtis* in my lawn.



Thelymitra carnea (Tiny Sun Orchid).

At the southern end of the Geebung Trail, we joined the Link Trail. This trail wanders down contours to a small ephemeral stream before a gradual climb back to the Wambool Trail. On this trail we passed through Allocasuarina and a beautiful Lomandra meadow. The Wambool track took us back to the car for lunch. All up a 3km easy going walk. Few birds were heard or even seen as it was late in the morning and possibly due to the warmth, around 26 degrees.

This orchid hotspot is easily accessible to Orange and the fire trail loop is comfortable and non-strenuous to walk around. I'm sure to head back in the middle of the 2023 orchid season and not so late as in this season.

OFNCS Committee News

The committee planned an interesting and varied program for 2023 when they met on 8th December. Talks will range from geology and fossils to astronomy, peregrines and orchid pollination. The excursions will be to many of the local parks and reserves. The March talk and excursion will focus on bush safety and how technology can be used to keep us safe.

Several submissions have been made including support for the dual naming of Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas, feedback on Native Vegetation Regulations and on the proposal for stormwater harvesting on Blackmans Swamp Creek. Thank you to those members who have made their own submission to the Geographical Names Board supporting the dual naming of the mountain.

Spring Creek Reservoir Survey **29th December.**

Report and photos Rosemary Stapleton.

Cilla and I were joined by Tom Carter, a young naturalist who was encouraged by Cilla to come and learn more about the local birds. It was a very still morning, so the water was calm and reflective but unlike most surveys there were very few waterbirds to be seen. At the track to the water's edge near the gate there were just a few coots, instead of hundreds, a few Pacific Black Ducks, a Little Pied Cormorant, and a Musk Duck. An occasional Australian White Ibis flew over heading out from the breeding colony on the western side of the reservoir. Male Superb Fairy Wrens were obvious as were the calls of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Australian Reed Warblers.

A little further down the road we met Nigel Sethack on one of his regular photographic walks here. He had just taken photos of Dusky Woodswallows at a nest. We found adults but couldn't spot the nest. The species that had been breeding well were the Pacific Black Ducks as during the survey we saw several groups of 9 or 10 tiny ducklings as well as a smaller group of older ducklings. Other evidence of breeding was juvenile Dusky Moorhens, Fairy Martins and possibly some juvenile White-faced Herons in a distant Radiata Pine. There was one family of Australian Wood Ducks.



A Fairy Martin with a yellow beak and some fluff indicating it is a juvenile.

Thirty-eight species were seen on the survey however several regulars were missing. We didn't see any of the three species of grebes or any rosellas and only one White-browed Scrubwren. Nineteen coots in total was a very low number!

As we reached the dam wall three Whistling Kites flew up and gave us a wonderful aerial acrobatic display for a few minutes as they flew

across to the far Radiata Pines. When asked. Tom's best birds were the Red-browed Finches and Cilla enjoyed the call of the Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike. As usual the survey was a pleasant walk and chat all while adding to the long history of surveys at the reservoir.

It was peak flowering time for St John's Wort and it was disappointing to see no control of it on council land and some of the neighbouring properties. The blackberries were also flourishing along some of the banks of the reservoir.

Mt Canobolas Update

Many of you have been to the summit since it opened to the public on 23rd December. Helmut expressed it well by saying '*Congratulations to all involved for seeing this momentous project through to completion.*'

Information boards, with photos, give visitors an insight into the biodiversity and history of the mountain. These improvements will make the summit and the SCA an even more important destination for tourists and locals.

The Lichen Wall (below), funded by OFNCS, highlights the importance and diversity of the lichen communities in the SCA. Read on to the Creature of the Month section of the newsletter to see just how unique the mountain is for cryptogams (lichens, mosses, liverworts and hornworts).



The Lichen Wall. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

You cannot miss the stunning artwork and pavement illustrating the Dreaming Story of Wiradjuri Elder Uncle Neil Ingram. This

highlights the cultural importance of Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas.



Dreaming Story artwork. Photo R Stapleton.

Stone Wall Update - Following the fire several old constructed stone walls were found in the SCA. Mapping showed they more or less followed the boundary of one of the historic lots. In mid-December Cath Stapleton found another wall along a different boundary of the lot. While tracking the wall a number of spikes of *Gastrodia procera*, the Tall Potato Orchid, were found. In other places in the SCA where these orchids have been found before there were fewer spikes this year.



Tall Potato Orchid, photo Cath Stapleton.

In December the areas of regrowth of heath were flourishing but if you walked some of the trails in early January you would have noticed that the heath was wilting due to the hot weather.

Canobolas Conservation Alliance Update

Report by Jenny Medd.



The CCA held its AGM (by Zoom) on Monday 19th December 2022. Both Executive and Committee were re-elected (unopposed) for 2023. However, the position of Vice-President remained vacant; a volunteer willing to provide back-up would be made very welcome. With membership based on each calendar year, renewal notices will be sent out soon, although anyone wishing to join can do so via the website at any time. There was no change in the membership fees.

At OCC's General Meeting on 6th December, Councillors Power, Mallard and McDonnell put forward a Motion to remove the mountain biking proposal from further budget considerations. Unfortunately this was defeated 7-5; however, considerable media coverage of the issue resulted. So, since we still don't know what OCC's intentions are we would encourage everyone to stay involved!

CCA remains prepared to hold a public forum if required, should the Council make the decision to pursue the development.

Public submissions to the Geographical Names Board regarding the nomination for dual naming of Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas closed in late January. With the widespread support for the nomination, we expect to hear a positive result soon.

Bush hygiene – CLEAN YOUR BOOTS

Report by Dick Medd.

Known as a "biodiversity bulldozer", *Phytophthora dieback* is capable of wreaking havoc on an entire ecosystem when it infects plants. The cause, *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, is an introduced soil-borne water mould. It thrives in warm moist soils particularly in high rainfall coastal areas, attacking the roots of plants causing them to rot. The plants are unable to absorb enough water and nutrients.

This plant pathogen can spread easily, causing death and potential extinction in susceptible plants, and loss of habitat for animals. The origin of the pathogen is a contentious subject, but it has the dubious distinction as one of being the world's most invasive species - present in over 70 countries around the world.

In Australia it is now found in most states and is a national problem. For example: In Stirling Ranges National Park in WA, Phytophthora is responsible for damaging up to 50 per cent of the biodiversity of the park over 15 years. In Tasmania, Phytophthora has damaged large areas of myrtle beech forest.



Part of a sign at the Western Lookout in Stirling Range National Park showing the effect of Phytophthora on the right-hand side of the photo. Photo Cath Stapleton, Sept. 2022.

Inland areas are not necessarily spared either, as it has found its way into the high plateau area of Barrington Tops National Park, so potentially could take hold on Mount Canobolas.

Any activity that moves soil, water or plant material can spread Phytophthora. In most situations eradication from infested areas is impossible, so it is critical to prevent further spread. To minimise spread of the disease from one site to another, it is important to ensure that footwear, tools, and vehicles, including bikes, are always clean on arrival and departure.

Bush motto:

ARRIVE CLEAN. LEAVE CLEAN

For bushwalkers, clean your boots of soil/mud and spray with a 70% solution of methylated spirits and water before entering bush and again on leaving. Find out more at https://ccma.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/14331-WILD-OTWAYS_WEB_V3.pdf or read the brochure attached to the newsletter.

Dates for your Diary

World Wetlands Day will be celebrated on 4th February at Ploughmans Wetland. Drop in to the picnic shelter at the wetlands any time between 10 and 1 to learn about the value of wetlands and to enjoy a walk. You can learn about the plans of the Ploughmans Wetland Care Group to enhance and protect this area.

The theme for 2023 is 'It's time for wetland restoration'.

Screening of 'Franklin' – 25th February.

This award-winning movie is about the fight to stop the damming of the Franklin River in Tasmania. The screening is being organised by ECCO as a fundraiser. It will be screened at the Orange Odeon cinemas and tickets need to be purchased online. To do so, simply google "Franklin" and follow the prompts and click onto the link on the attached poster. Come along to remember or learn about this successful environmental campaign.

2023 Cowra Woodland Bird Surveys,

Dates for 2023 are February 11/12, April 15/16, July 15/16, October 14/15, and February 17/18 2024. Contact Julian Reid on **0405 922 505** or at julianr@homeemail.com

Clean up Australia Day Sunday, 5th March.

Earth Hour, 25th March.

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

Preliminary details from Liz Davis, CTLLS.

<https://www.trybooking.com/CERVE>

When you register your interest you will receive an email with a link to a survey that will support Liz to create an event catered to your needs & interests.

There will be workshops on soils, fungi in focus, surveys, various food talks & tastings & more. Events will be throughout the month of May, but pencil in the 2nd week of May with final dates TBC. Liz is tentatively looking at: May 9th & 10th Fungi in Focus workshops, 11th Ag stream, 12th NRM stream & Café Champignon on evening of 12th, 14th Mt Canobolas Fungi Survey, 20th Watershed Landcare Ferntree Gully Fungi photography.

The Field Nats May excursion will be the Mt Canobolas Fungi Survey on Sunday 14th.

Sightings around Orange

Things with Wings

Channel-billed Cuckoo – on 12th December Cilla thought one had flown past the CSU water tower. After an email to birders to keep an eye out for them Nigel Sethack shared this great shot of one he photographed flying over Spring Hill Dam on the 1st December. This species is not often reported from the Orange

area with the last one recorded in 2003....also by Cilla.



Dollarbirds, summer visitors to Orange, have been seen in the area by several members. John Hansen captured this pair below at Swinging Bridge Cellars in mid-December. There was one on Witton Place, off Cargo Road on 21st January.



Brush Cuckoo - heard by Cilla on 31st December in the open forest on her property.

Pacific Koels can be heard around Orange and Rosemary managed to photograph one at Steeles Lane after doing the Spring Creek surveys. The Willie Wagtails and Magpie Larks were harassing it so much it flew to an exposed branch.



Restless Flycatcher seen by the Huxtables at Spring Creek Reservoir on 15th January. Bernie commented that this is the first they have seen for years. Julian Reid, the scientist involved with Cowra Birds, commented last spring that the species appears to be declining.

Nigel S has seen 3 chicks in the **Dusky Woodswallow's** nest at Spring Creek Reservoir.

Tawny Frogmouths with a chick seen on Fern Tree Gully Track on 19th December by Evan Hallein and Fiona Knox.

Plants

Persoonia rigida were in flower when Hai walked and photographed the unusual flowers (below) near The Falls in the Mullion Range SCA on 12th January.



Thysanotus tuberosus, Common Fringe Lily, is flowering along the Nature Trail Track on Mt Canobolas. Ken Mills took the great photo below on one of his walks along the track.



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

Creature of the Month.

Riccia epecenia

Text and photos by Rosemary Stapleton with quotes (in italics) from Dr Cargill's article describing the species.

Riccia epecenia is a thalloid liverwort that is new to science and was described and named for the first time by Dr Chris Cargill in December 2022. Thalloid (thallose) liverworts have a ribbonlike, or strap-shaped, body that grows flat on the ground (<https://www.britannica.com/plant/thallose-liverwort>).

Dr Cargill, a liverwort specialist, was one of the scientists who undertook bryophyte surveys on Mt Canobolas in May and October 2022. When on a rocky shelf just off Gum Ridge Trail Chris became **very** excited about one of the liverworts she had found. We now know why! Chris is from the Australian National Herbarium Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research (a joint venture between Parks Australia and CSIRO).



Rosette of R. epecenia. Photo R Stapleton.

To describe the species Chris studied specimens found in Mt Canobolas SCA in May 2022 and from 2 locations near Cooma found in 2020. *‘These three populations were recorded growing on bare patches of soil in between rock slabs and rocky outcrops with other, common Riccia species.’* After measurement, examination and microscopic study of live plants and reproductive structures Chris confirmed her initial thoughts that this was a new species. Genetic studies showed the *‘closest relative to R. epecenia was R. trachyglossum that grows on soil banks in the highlands of Lesotho. Both share similar morphologies and also appear to share similar environmental preferences, occurring at relatively high altitudes.’*

R. epecenia is unusual *‘due to its velvety dorsal surface and large hyaline (transparent) scales along its ventral flanks. The thallus of the plants are pale sage green in colour and their margins are flat. This differs from R. trachyglossum which is blue-green and has raised margins.’*

The new liverwort is *‘from the Riccia section Piliiferae, a section previously unrecorded from Australia. Eighteen of the 19 described species in this section come from South Africa and Lesotho’*. The other recently described species is from the Canary Islands later also found in China.

In the article Chris states *‘the etymology of the name is from the Greek epekenia (Gr.) – beyond, on the far side, referring to the locality of this species in relation to its closest relatives which are all in southern Africa and also in reference to my favourite science cartoonist, Gary Larson and his cartoon series, The Far Side.’* The holotype specimen (the single specimen expressly designated as the name-bearing “type” by the original author of the species) is one Chris collected from a rocky shelf on Gum Ridge Fire Trail West, Mt Canobolas SCA. Being such a new discovery, *‘the conservation status of the species has not been evaluated’*.



Dr Chris Cargill pointing out the first plant of R. epecenia that she found on Gum Ridge Fire Trail in May 2022. Photo R Stapleton.

This discovery reinforces that Mt Canobolas is a special environment, being the type locality

for a number of species as well as hosting several species endemic to the SCA. Who knows what other species are on the mountain yet to be discovered? Thanks to Dick Medd for inviting Chris and the other scientists to the SCA to study bryophytes and to NPWS for allowing this research to occur.

Chris is happy for her published article to be made available on request from the newsletter editor. If you are interested please email orangefieldnats@gmail.com.

**The beauty of Kanangra Boyd National Park following the 2019 fires.
Photographed by Col Bower on 12/1/2023.**



Top left: *Xyris ustulata* meadow.
Bottom left: *Utricularia dichotoma*
Right: *Thelymitra cyanea*.

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Single member – \$25

Concession rate (emailed newsletters) – \$12.50

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Concession rate (printed newsletters) – \$25

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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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