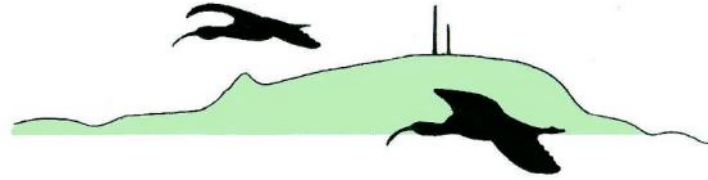


**ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc**



**NEWSLETTER JULY 2023**

**NEXT MEETING**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July, 7.30 pm.  
The Nullarbor,  
so much more than just a treeless plain.**

*Speaker – Denis Marsh*

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

**Excursion**

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July.  
Borenore Karst Conservation Reserve**

**Next Meeting - Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July, 7.30 pm.  
The Nullarbor, so much more than just a  
treeless plain.**

*Speaker – Denis Marsh.*

Denis's talk will focus on a 20+ year Citizen Science project he has been involved in. He has done multiple speleological expeditions, locating, documenting and exploring caves and other karst features, along with cultural heritage sites, across the Nullarbor in SA and WA. At times this has been with the assistance of an ultralight aircraft.

Some of the expeditions have involved working with Adelaide University and the Adelaide Museum recovering Thylacine skeletal remains the project had found.

The Nullarbor Plain is around 200,000 square kilometres in area and is the world's largest single exposure of limestone. It is one of Australia's last wilderness areas with much of it relatively inaccessible to the general public. As well as containing many hundreds of caves, the entire Nullarbor contains hundreds of cultural heritage sites. Denis hopes to give an appreciation of what can be found on the Nullarbor and some of the project's discoveries as well as the threats to the area.

**Next Excursion – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July.  
Borenore Karst Conservation Reserve.**

Denis will lead a walk up to, but not into, the Arch Cave and around the track to the back of the Arch. The walk will then go off the track and through the bush to look at a doline feature and a solution hole to the south of the picnic area. This will not involve going into a cave, but people could take a quick look into the Arch. The walk will return to the picnic area for lunch. If people wish to stay and look at something else with Denis, he is happy to do so after lunch.



*Borenore Caves. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.*

Meet at Orange High School Bus Bay at 9am. The walk will require moderate fitness, long pants and sturdy footwear. Bring your lunch and a chair.

As Covid and the flu are around you will be responsible for the safety of yourself and others. Please do not attend if feeling sick or if you have been a close contact in the week beforehand. Masks can be worn and if car-pooling please respect the driver's requests.

**Last Meeting – Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June,  
The Great North Trip (GnT)**

*Speaker – Steve Woodhall.*

*Report by Jenny Pratten.*

Steve and Tracy Sorensen undertook a 22,000 kilometre camping trip commencing in April 2022, that largely saw them circling

Australia. The talk to OFNCS highlighted several areas:

Currawinya National Park at Hungerford in Southwest QLD. It is a 344,000 ha park mainly of mulga woodlands, with Coolabah, River Red Gum and Blackbox. It becomes a wetland due to local rains and the overflow from the Paroo River so their visit after 2 wet years was optimal. On Lake Wyara, a salty lake, they saw tens of thousands of Pelicans and Black Swans and their cygnets. On nearby Lake Numalla, a freshwater lake, there were less birds.



*Lake Wyara pelican colony. Photo S Woodall.*

Kakadu is a 2 million ha World Heritage Area (for its natural AND cultural significance). 1.5 metres of rain falls in 3 months, flooding 33% of the park. According to Aboriginal culture, there are 6 seasons & Steve explained they visited during Yekke (May – June) which is usually cool with low humidity, but they found it very humid. Being early May, it was still too wet to access everywhere and it was hazard reduction season, with the traditional owners doing burning. Aboriginal artwork can be seen everywhere.



*View from Ubir looking east towards Arnhem Land. It shows the sandstone landforms and the flat floodplain. Photo Steve Woodhall.*

The Yellow Water guided boat cruise on the permanent waterhole was a must and they saw

masses of waterlilies, kingfishers, Sea Eagles, Plumed Whistling Ducks, Magpie Geese and Jabiru so had plenty of photographic moments.

Purnululu National Park is a 237,900 ha World Heritage Area in the East Kimberley region of WA, which Steve described as stunning. Ancient riverbeds and gorges abound with relict palm trees and many Aboriginal sites. Cathedral Cave/Gorge is another must see.

This turned into a good spot to socially distance themselves having caught Covid while on the boat trip on Lake Argyle. With their own private camping spot (having been kicked out of the camping area) they spent 8 days of isolation until rain came and they headed to Halls Creek. The helpful staff from the camp kept a watch on them and provided supplies.



*Cathedral Gorge, Purnululu NP. Steve pointed out the scale by pointing to the person on the left in blue. Photo Steve Woodhall.*

Broome Bird Observatory. Tracy and Steve enjoyed the laid-back feel of the observatory including 6pm drinks/call of the card where visitors are asked if they have seen each bird species that day and the list is checked. Data collection at its best!



*Roebuck Bay at high tide. Once the tide goes out it becomes feeding habitat for thousands of migratory shorebirds. Photo Steve Woodhall.*



The observatory is a research and education facility on Roebuck Bay which at low tide provides 17,000 ha of bird feeding habitat. The area is one of the world's most important sites for migratory shorebirds. These birds migrate 10,000 kms from Siberia to the Yellow Sea in China to Broome and return. Young birds stay in the bay for over a year before making their first migrations. The mudflats provide enormous amounts of food to numerous species with differing length beaks so they can support millions of birds. Steve described the coastline as stunning; fossil dinosaur footprints can be seen and the sunsets are spectacular.

Steve's talk brought back memories for those who had visited these places. And for those who haven't ventured that far it gave them an insight into the beauty and variety of these places.

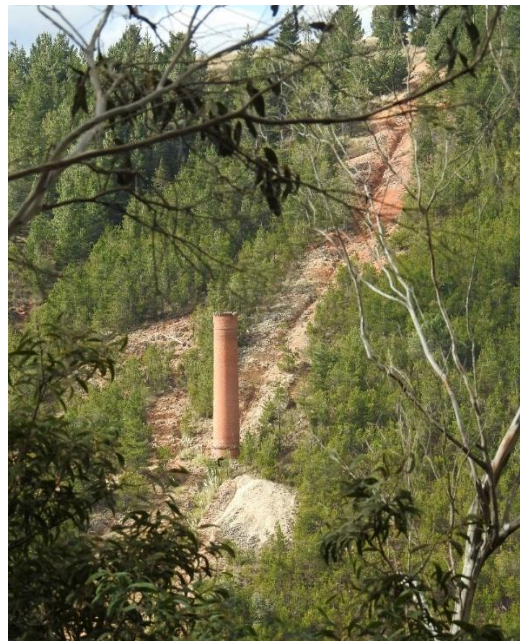
**Last Excursion – Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June. Sunny Corner and Turon State Forest Tag Along.**  
*Leader Steve Woodhall. Report by J Medd.*

The June excursion took us in a 4wd convoy through the higher landscapes to the east of Bathurst. Despite a heavy frost in Orange, we were still a tad surprised to see the extent of the frost, both on the tall roadside vegetation and high into the adjacent trees, as we drove through the thick fog at Dunkeld that shrouded all the valleys and low-lying areas around Bathurst.

Heading in the direction of Sunny Corner, our first stop was a roadside area giving a view across to the site of the former Sunny Corner Silver Mine. Alluvial gold had been discovered nearby as early as 1854, followed later by copper, lead, zinc and silver. It was the 1877 discovery of silver at the Sunny Corner site that was most significant, leading to the biggest mine in Australia (with a smelter built on site in 1884) until BHP became fully established at Broken Hill. Over time the mine produced some 3.5 million oz. of silver and 140,000 oz. of gold. The operations ceased in the early 1920s. [A comment from Peter: "Did you notice the ornate top on the chimney? The artisans of those days did not just whack something up, they made a statement."]

Exploration licences still exist over the area. Unfortunately, as with so many old mine sites, the surrounding environment has suffered significant damage. Pollution of Daylight Creek is of particular concern, with highly

acidic recordings (Ph levels of 2) effectively rendering parts of the creek a dead zone. The waters have been described by well-known Professor Ian Wright, as "a toxic cocktail at dangerous levels".



*The chimney and the flume up the hillside were mostly all that was clearly visible from our observation point, other than an obviously very de-graded hillside. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.*

Moving on we then made another two short stops to be shown examples of questionable damage to the natural environment. The first was to consider the management of reserve land as it abutted pine forest, separated by the road (Cupitt's Lane at this point). The pine forest, as always, had been planted right up to the roadside and it was the native forest opposite that was to be managed (read "cleared") with particular consideration to providing a fire break. Steve shared a brief history of forestry in the area, including the demise of associated departmental resources which have been even heavier than experienced by NPWS. He explained that, following the disastrous southern fires of 2019/20, timber from local plantations in this area was diverted and trucked to Albury mills to sustain contracts there.

Further on we paused to view an old, tall, hollow tree stump that had once been home to a bird's nest (likely cockatoos). This had been raided for the eggs or chicks, very likely illegally. Steve advised that only a collector who held a scientific licence (for research purposes) could have done so legally. A distraction at this point was the discovery of

orchid leaves amongst the leaf litter. Initially thought to (potentially) be a rarely seen species *Chiloglottis* sp. aff. *palachila*, but which has now been identified as most likely the common *C. valida*. A few in the group felt it might be worth returning to later in the year!



*The neatly cut access for robbing the bird's nest. Photo Jenny Medd.*

Continuing along Eskdale Road, which skirts along the eastern edge of Winburndale NR where it adjoins Turon State Forest, our next stop was at the Birri Birri Ground, a “burial stone” site which is a significant Wiradjuri Cultural site. It is believed to be the only known site of this type in the Bathurst area. Birri Birri is said to mean “counting of the dead” and is tied to the belief that when an Indigenous person dies their spirit is absorbed into a stone which was then added to a cairn from which ultimately the spirit could return to the sky. Located in the Turon State Forest, the site was finally recognised and protected through a collaboration between NPWS and the Bathurst Aboriginal Land Council. A related article was published in the Western Advocate on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1998. It has been said the site originally consisted of 14 spherical piles or cairns of stones of varying sizes; the largest pile was around a metre high and 2 metres wide. The stones are from weather-

worn parent rock of red conglomerate. Most of the rock piles have unfortunately been scattered and reduced over time due to invasive local activities. The existence of a red ochre deposit nearby has not been confirmed in recent times.



*“Burial stone mounds” at the Birri Birri Ground. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.*

Whilst the Aboriginal context of the site was interesting (and sobering), the “field naturalists” were easily distracted by both the geology and particularly the rich plant life on the site. Peter has offered the following explanation of the geology: “The sedimentary rocks, where the Aboriginal mounds are located, as well as in the cliffs at the next stop, are Cobble Conglomerates, with interlayered finer and coarser beds, belonging to the Lambie Group of sediments of Late Devonian age (354mY-369mY). It was dated by fossils in some of the finer grained sediments. At the Aboriginal site there are Boulder Conglomerates (boulders are >256 mm, cobbles 64-256mm). Conglomerates are designated by the size of the predominant larger clasts (pieces of rock that make up the conglomerate). The heaps are a collection of all sizes of clasts from nearby.”

High, rocky, exposed and wind-swept, the area was dominated by low-growing *Calytrix* encrusted with beard lichen. The adjacent forest was mainly Inland Scribbly Gum. The ground, however, was covered by a delightful array of mosses and lichens, heavily interspersed with orchid leaves of more than one species, along with beard heath and what



appeared to be young yam daisies. This gives indications of a hotspot inviting that return visit in spring!



*Orchids, mosses, lichens and the pink buds of a beard heath at the Birri Birri Ground. Photo Jenny Medd.*

A leisurely lunch (thankfully out of the bitterly cold wind!) was enjoyed before we followed Steve further on, via Clear Creek Road, to a cliff top overlooking the precipitous hills of Winburndale NR. The cliff top's conglomerate rock structure provided a glimpse into a complex geological history. The altitude produced a broad panorama across steep hills, valleys, and plains to distant ranges on the horizon. Despite the seriously cold wind, all persisted with a brief trek to thoroughly enjoy the spectacular views, to note yet another different flora collection and finally pose (very quickly!) for the obligatory group photo before we all froze.



*View across Winburndale NR. Photo J Medd.*

Changing native forest communities had been noted along our route, with a few shrubs in the understorey particularly catching people's attention: *Melichrus urceolatus* (flowering), *Exocarpos stricta* (quite different to our local species), *Styphelia triflora* (flowering), *Leucopogon attenuatus* (beard heath at the Birri Birri ground, with flowers just opening), *Persoonia linearis* and most intriguing, an *Asterolasia* sp. (with just a couple of flowers catching the eye; possibly *A. buckinghamii*) on the cliffs, along with *Prostanthera lasianthos*. As always, our thanks go to Dick for fielding all the botanical queries.



*Possibly Asterolasia buckinghamii. Photo Jenny Medd.*



*One of the many lichens on the Cobble Conglomerate cliff line. Photo R Stapleton.*

Returning to Eskdale Road, we continued to the Mt Horrible Rd and then via Limekilns back into Bathurst. Time had run out to take in the proposed route through Wattle Flat and to visit the Heritage Lands Reserve which contains a significant area of *Eucalyptus cinerea* (not *E. pulverulenta* as previously suggested).

A very appreciative vote of thanks was offered to Steve as we prepared to leave him in Bathurst; reiterated here as the entire group of Field Nats who'd participated (Rosemary, Dick, Jenny, Peter, Helmut, Ann, John, Hai, Helen and Dennis) had not only thoroughly enjoyed the trip but appreciated the knowledge that Steve shared so generously and the chance to visit some little-known places.

Denis later offered this comment: "From my perspective, the excursion seemed to highlight a contrast in values held for the environment and landscape between European and First Nations people. One sees an economic resource and monetary value while the other sees a natural resource and connected spiritual value. Witnessing the impact from extraction of mineral resources and commercial forestry, alongside a relatively undisturbed nature reserve, added another chill factor beyond the sometimes-brisk wind felt on the day. It felt a rare privilege to have the opportunity to visit

the Aboriginal stone arrangements/mounds which provide a glimpse into the fabric of past Aboriginal society and culture.”

### **OFNCS Committee News**

The main item for discussion at the June Committee Meeting was consideration of a business plan from Dick Medd and Col Bower for the publication of the book ‘Orchids of Central Western NSW’. Col and Dick have been working on this for some time and have obtained quotes for printing and binding. The committee agreed to the suggestion that OFNCS be the publisher and agreed to provide a grant to cover the cost of publication. These funds, raised from consultancies undertaken by several OFNCS members in the 1990’s (including Col and Dick), have been held to assist with publications such as this. Col and Dick will handle printing and sales independently of OFNCS. An agreement has been reached for OFNCS to receive a percentage of the net income from book sales. It is anticipated that the book will be available for sale later in the year, hopefully in good time for Christmas. Details of how you can buy the book will be announced when they are available.

Several members have been involved in searches for velvet worms in Crown Land and State Forests surrounding the SCA. It has been difficult to find logs old and rotted enough to provide suitable habitat.

### **Spring Creek Reservoir Quarterly Bird Survey, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

*Report by Rosemary Stapleton.*

It was fortunate that Cilla and I had agreed on a 10am start for the winter survey of Spring Creek Reservoir. At 9.30 there were lots of cars parked along the road because of an Orange Runners Club event, however they had finished as we walked to the water’s edge. As usual there were lots of Eurasian Coots (about 156 in this part of the reservoir) and hidden among them 3 Australasian Shovelers and 2 Musk Ducks. One fully grown, but still grey sub-adult Black Swan, glided from behind the reeds to join its black and white parent. In the distance Little Pied Cormorants roosted along the western edge on fallen willow branches.

As we scanned the water, we were excited to see a raft of small grebes. That is when the challenge began. Were they Australasian or Hoary-headed Grebes? These species are

easily distinguished when in breeding plumage but much more difficult in their winter plumage. Cilla’s spotting scope came in handy as we could see one Hoary-headed Grebe with its typical ‘brushed back grey hair’. Several others had a blush of orange on their sides typical of the Australasian Grebe. Our conclusion was that it was a mixed group. The other challenge was trying to count them as every few seconds some would dive and disappear. We estimated between 20 and 25 grebes. The raft also contained some coots, diving for water weeds, and we wondered if there was some association between the grebes and coots.



*A small section of one of the rafts of grebes and coots. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.*

As we walked to the dam wall there were few calls or sightings of the usual woodland birds. We saw an occasional Superb Fairywren and a group of Red-browed Finches. A scan across the water at the dam wall revealed two more even larger rafts of grebes; one of which we estimated to be over 50. A few Brown and Yellow Thornbill were in the Radiata Pines at the boatshed, probably enjoying protection from the cold wind that had come up. The only raptor, a Nankeen Kestrel, glided around these trees.

Our final estimate of the total number of grebes was 139. On the 2-hour survey we saw only 25 species, and while lower than usual it was good to see some species, such as the grebes and shovelers return to the reservoir.

### **August Talk and Excursion**

The July and August talks and excursions have been swapped around so the Peregrines are now the focus in August.

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August** – Dr Cilla Kinross will allow us to look through ‘A window on the lives of the CSU Peregrines’.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August** – CSU Peregrines and a visit to Cilla’s bird survey sites in the bush on her property on Ophir Road.



## **Mt Canobolas Update**

Excellent news on June 30, in the Government Gazette, that the application for dual naming of [Gaanha bula](#) Mt Canobolas had been accepted by the Geographical Names Board.

On 26 June, when asked for a quote for the newsletter, Uncle Neil Ingram said 'Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to let all our supporters know that the Geographical Name Board notified me today and gave me the good news that the Gaanha bula and Mt Canobolas Dual Naming application has been approved. It is now official, and I am so happy that all the hard work has paid off.

The Traditional Aboriginal name can now be recognized. This means the feature has two names, an Aboriginal name and a non-Aboriginal name, each existing in their own right – Gaanha bula/Mt. Canobolas.'



*Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas from Mt Towac.  
Photo Rosemary Stapleton.*

It would seem the Federal Falls Walking Track is now open after helicopter lifts of material for the track upgrade in the last week of June.

## **CWEC Meeting on Mines**, 17<sup>th</sup> June. *Report by Rosemary Stapleton.*

How can one be both inspired and depressed at the same time by a meeting? That is how I felt after the CWEC meeting on mines.

Representatives from the three communities that are currently and potentially affected by mines in the Central West addressed the meeting. The challenges being faced by residents in the path of the dust clouds from Cadia were described. Advocates from the communities that will be affected by the McPhillamy's Mine, at Kings Plains, and the Bowden's Silver, Lead and Zinc Mine at Lue spoke about their disappointment that the Independent Planning Commission gave little

or no consideration to issues raised by them. Sue Higginson, Greens member of the NSW Legislative Council, demonstrated her detailed knowledge of legislation and spoke of what needed to be changed to ensure that the voices of communities were heard.

The passion and in-depth knowledge of the speakers was inspiring. But it was depressing to get a greater understanding of how unlevel the playing field is for people and communities trying to stop developments by large, well-resourced companies in a weak legislative environment.

The meeting ended with Bev Smiles outlining the key asks of government on mining impacts:

### *Appeal rights:*

- Reinstatement of merit appeal rights through the NSW Land and Environment Court – for a truly independent analysis of the quality of environmental assessment.

### *Policy changes to direct decision-makers:*

- Full health impact assessment requirements in large project Environment Impact Assessment
- A more balanced approach to cost benefits analysis so that the true value of social and environmental costs are accounted for.
- Independent expert advice, not sole reliance on reports paid for by mining companies as the key source of information for Government agencies and the Independent Planning Commission.

### *Improvements in the regulation of large mining projects:*

- Stronger, enforceable conditions – not reliance on post approval management plans
- Larger fines and meaningful penalties with financial or operational deterrence
- More oversight from Government agencies with powers to enforce tangible actions.

### *Other:*

- Revoking of the Independent Planning Commission approval of both the McPhillamy's and Bowden's mines on the grounds of administrative failure to provide procedural fairness.
- Conduct of an inquiry into the function and practice of the Independent Planning Commission.

All those who attended were encouraged to take individual and group action to lobby politicians to implement these requests.

### Dates for your Diary

**2023 Cowra Woodland Bird Survey dates** are October 14/15, and February 17/18 2024. Contact Sue Proust for more information or to register for surveying at [sueproust@bigpond.com](mailto:sueproust@bigpond.com).

**Saturday 5th August 3.30pm.** ECCO has organised a screening of 'The Giants' at Orange Odeon Cinema.

This is a biopic of environmentalist Bob Brown, a National Living Treasure, leader of the world's first Green Party and the first openly gay member of parliament in Australia. It's also about the life of Trees, which scientists are only starting to understand. The film goes from Bob's story to the trees' story - revealing just how closely intertwined they are. It's a joyous exploration of the Forest delivered in a new, creative and awe-inspiring way. ECCO's aim is to raise awareness of the importance of forests, not just in Tasmania, but across NSW and the world.

Tickets are \$25 each and can be purchased here: <https://fan-force.com/screenings/the-giants-odeon-5-cinemas/>

**7 September - Threatened Species Day.** This day marks an important date in Australian history - the death of the last remaining Tasmanian Tiger. This year Viv Howard, from Central Tablelands LLS, is organising activities across September for **Orange Biodiversity and Threatened Species Month**. The overarching objective of the events is to raise the profile of biodiversity and threatened species throughout the Orange region. Activities will include talks, plantings, spotlighting, public art, and a screening of the film 'The Message of the Lyrebird'. Further details of the film can be found here - <https://www.themessageofthelyrebird.com/>

In September the Birds of Australia Storybox is coming to the Orange Regional Museum. This is an audio-visual animation of John and Elizabeth Gould's 8 volume *The Birds of Australia*, which was published between 1840 and 1848. It is currently at the Australian Museum in Sydney.

### Sightings around Orange

If you see anything interesting, please email [orangefieldnats@gmail.com](mailto:orangefieldnats@gmail.com) or post it on Facebook.

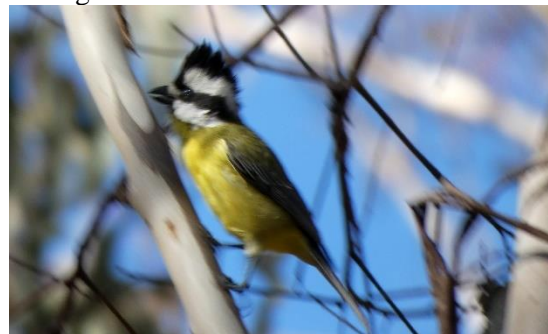
### Things with Wings

**Brown Falcon light morph**– sightings of raptors are becoming less common. Nigel Sethack captured this stunning photo along Sandy Creek Road to the east of Cudal.



Finding birds at the moment is very weather dependent, as Cilla found in mid-June. At one CSU survey site she saw almost nothing in cold wind and cloudy conditions. She surveyed at the same site the next morning and saw a **Flame Robin, Golden Whistler**, plus many other birds, even a pair of shovelers on the dam.

**Crested Shrike Tit** (below)– a nice surprise for Cilla on 27 June at one of the survey sites at her place that we will visit for the excursion in August.



**Scarlet Robin** female in North Mullion State Forest seen by Cilla on 27 June.

### Plants

**Bumberry Section of Goobang National Park.** The Stapletons visited this area on a sunny day on the long weekend. The shrubs and heath have responded to the last few years of rain and look very healthy. The *Grevillea floribunda* is a mass of orange buds (below) which will open soon. It seemed to be between seasons for the orchids with pollinated stems of *Pterostylis rubescens*. There were lots of



Greenhood rosettes with just one Hairy Snail Orchid bud as well as Mosquito Orchids in bud. In the past few years there was often lots of fungi but not on this visit.



The Ironbarks were flowering, and White-eared Honeyeaters and Noisy Friarbirds were in these trees. It would be well worth a visit this spring as if El Nino occurs the area will be back to its usual dry conditions.

**Mt Bulga.** Hai enjoyed the sun at Mt Bulga on 17 June and was keen to identify some plants he was unfamiliar with. Dick identified a creeping vine as a good specimen of *Billardiera scandens*, Apple Berry. The other was *Platylobium formosum*, Handsome Flat Pea (below) which Dick said was common in the Mt Bulga area and South Mullion Reserve, but rare elsewhere around Orange.



### **Creature of the Month**

*Laccocephalum mylittae*. A fungus commonly known as Native Bread or Blackfellow's Bread.

*Text by Jenny Medd and Hai Wu.*

*Photos by Hai Wu.*

Hai Wu found this sclerotium (a compact mass of hardened fungal mycelium containing food

reserves) of *Laccocephalum mylittae* at Orange View, Mt Canobolas SCA at the end of April. It was identified by the NSW Fungi group.



The diameter of this specimen was about 15cm and height about 10cm, the white inside being jelly like, but a little firm. An edible fungus, the common name refers to this large underground, saprotrophic fruiting body which was a popular food item enjoyed by Aboriginal people. It was eaten raw or roasted and has been described as having the flavour of boiled rice, though “not particularly tasty”. It has been noted as a fire responsive species although growing in both rainforests and eucalypt forest. It was often located by smell, which would be detected by Aboriginal people by pushing a stick into the ground as they walked along and smelling the stick after pulling it out.



The species was originally described as *Polyporus mylittae* by Mordecai Cubitt Cooke and George Edward Masee in 1893, before being placed in the small genus *Laccocephalum* by María Núñez and Leif Ryvardeen in 1995.

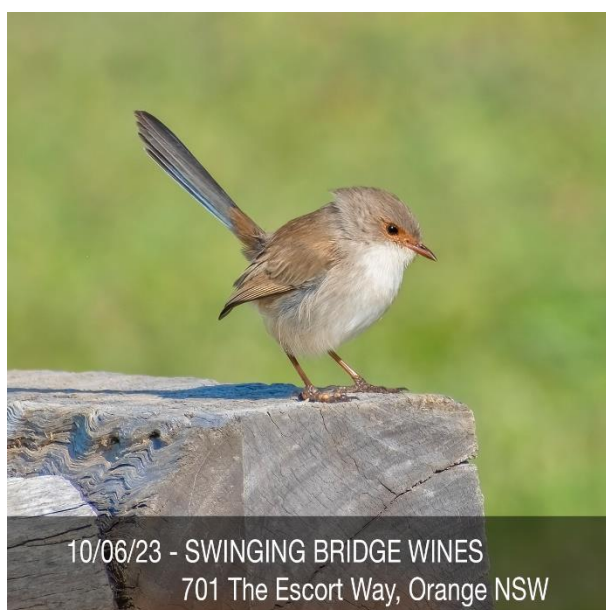
Australian specimens recorded on ALA are reasonably sparse; some have been found along the southern tip of Western Australia, most others along the south-east corner of Qld, the east coast of NSW and across Victoria, as well as coastal areas of Tasmania.

*Laccocephalum mylittae* is also found in New Zealand and China. Its Chinese name is Lei Wan (Thunder Ball) and is used in traditional herbal medicine to kill parasites. Modern research has confirmed it has pharmaceutical components for anthelmintic functions. Aboriginal people may have eaten it for the same reason.

Hai shared the following story .... ‘*There is folklore about this herbal fungi: A middle aged man got a strange disease - whenever he spoke there was a repeat from his belly, and it was getting louder. One day he met a Taoist priest. The priest told him he got yes-man in his belly, and he needed to read the herbal medicine book to find out which one would silence the repetition. When he was back at home, he began to read the book. When he read out Thunder Ball, there was no repeat. So, he bought the herb and consumed it and finally he got rid of the worm.*’

### Avian Poxvirus

*Observations & photos by John Hansen.*



The photos of these two Superb Fairywrens were taken 12 months apart at different locations around Orange about 17 kilometres apart. When driving the wine tour bus, I often take my camera out to get some “Wrensday” photos. You might notice both these birds have wart-like nodules on their toes. I believe these lesions are caused by an avian poxvirus infection.

It seems likely that all bird species are susceptible to avian poxviruses which have been around for a very long time. While researching this virus I came across a fact sheet from Wildlife Health Australia, where they noted the reported instances of poxvirus in native species. Surprisingly it didn’t mention any report of the virus found among Superb Fairywrens. While in general poxvirus is said to be a relatively mild disease with low levels of infection, it can cause devastation with introduction to naïve bird populations, such as occurred in Hawaii, the Galapagos and the Canary Islands.

Thankfully that is not the case here and these little guys have fully recovered. However, with climate change there may be an increase in infection vectors in the future and the occurrence of poxvirus could cause significant problems in some populations of our native species of birds, many of which are already under pressure from habitat loss.

Thanks, John, for these interesting observations. To find out more go to a [Wildlife Health Fact Sheet](#)





*The panorama from the cliff edge looking west with Mt Canobolas in the far distance. Photo Ann Tracey.*



*The 'cool' group on the cliff top overlooking Winburndale Nature Reserve. Left to right- Peter Toedter, Denis Marsh, Rosemary Stapleton, John Tracey, Ann Tracey, Dick Medd, Steve Woodhall, Jenny Medd, Hai Wu, and Helen Croke. Photo Helmut Berndt.*

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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