

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 8th June, 7.30 pm. Outback Adventures.

Speakers – Steve Woodhall & Tracy Sorensen
Face to face at Nguluway Ngurang Senior
Citizens Centre North Room
(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

Committee Meeting Thursday 8th June, 6.30 pm.

Excursion
Sunday 18th June.

NOTE – 1 week later than usual.

Sunny Corner and Wattle Flat Tag Along.

Next Meeting - Thursday 8th June, 7.30 pm. Outback Adventures.

Speakers – Steve Woodhall & Tracy Sorensen.

Steve and Tracy will share with us the highlights from their trip last year through outback Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. They'll look at some of the magnificent national parks they visited, discuss the fauna they encountered and give their thoughts on some of the environmental and cultural issues encountered along the way.

Come along and enjoy their experiences through their great photos (such as below), their impressions and stories.



Towering domes at Purnululu National Park World Heritage Area, Western Australia.

NOTE – 1 week later than usual.

Sunny Corner and Wattle Flat Tag Along.

Leader Steve Woodhall.

Meet at Orange High School Bus Bay at 9am to carpool into 4WD vehicles. We'll meet Steve at the Bathurst sports fields.

Steve will lead us to the Sunny Corner Silver, Lead and Zinc mine site to look at historical activity and environmental impacts. We will then go to Birri Birri Stone Arrangement Aboriginal Site in Sunny Corner State Forest. We'll travel along the eastern boundary of Winburndale Nature Reserve and, if time permits, stop at Wattle Flat Heritage Lands to see the rare *Eucalyptus pulverulenta*. If we run out of time we'll head back via Peel Common.

This is a 4WD vehicle full day excursion. It is also high elevation country and will be cold in July. Please wear warm clothes and sturdy shoes and bring your lunch.

Steve will check the tracks beforehand. If the weather forecast is bad we will go to Wattle Flat and Peel Common instead.

As Covid and the flu are around you will be responsible for the safety of yourself and others at the meeting and excursion. 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 any requests of the driver.

<u>Last Meeting</u> – Thursday 11th May, NPWS Volunteer Program. Speaker - Jack Fry, Ranger, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. *Report by Rosemary Stapleton*.

Thanks Jack for travelling from Bathurst to share your enthusiasm for the NPWS Volunteer Program. Jack explained that this program has been running for six years, mainly in metropolitan and coastal areas. There are 4,000 registered volunteers involved in around 250 activities. In 2019-20 48% of these activities were bush regeneration and 23% related to visitor services, such as information centres. There are only a few programs west of the Blue Mountains, one of which is the annual Glossy Black Cockatoo Count in the Pilliga, Goonoo and Goobang reserves.

A small NPWS Team co-ordinates the program across the state, including the Volunteer Management Tool and app. NPWS staff, such as rangers like Jack, are the local staff who train and supervise volunteers in the activities.

The activities Jack is keen to start are for Mt Canobolas SCA and the Borenore Karst Conservation Reserve. The public can volunteer for bush regeneration activities, with a focus on weed removal and control, as well as rubbish removal. Graffiti removal is also an activity at Borenore. Several other programs, such as sensitive surveys, are restricted to selected OFNCS members and not open to the public. An example of a restricted activity would be the recent glider surveys. Some of these activities may require a good level of fitness as the terrain of the reserves can be steep and uneven.



Glider survey volunteers James Roth, Rosemary Stapleton and Nigel Hobden. Photo Helmut Berndt.

Jack outlined the process of setting up these activities and what is involved for volunteers:

- Register using the QR codes and select the program you wish to be involved in. By registering you will be covered by NPWS insurance when undertaking the activity.
- There is some initial online learning to be done, followed by questions, which is the necessary induction and training for the activity. Jack will follow-up with work

- health and safety training, that includes safe use of equipment, in the reserve.
- A small amount of funding is available each year for the activities and Jack has used this to purchase equipment. When needed volunteers will be supplied with personal protective equipment. They may also be able to obtain clothing such as hats and shirts or other benefits.
- Small teams of interested volunteers will be formed and once Jack gives the okay each team will start the activity. A team leader is then chosen to organise the activity.
- Each volunteer logs on to a Volunteer Information Portal (VIP) that allows them to log on and off and record their hours. The VIP also includes occasional emails and news feeds.

When asked if volunteers would be taking work away from NPWS staff Jack said no. Volunteers are seen as a valuable asset that compliment NPWS staff. He outlined the huge scale of the Western Region and the limited number of staff that cover the many parks and reserves in it. It was a surprise to hear that the Central West Area maintenance team, which is small, covers 14 reserves and Jack has 7 reserves or parks to manage. Jack was also asked about monitoring the effectiveness of these activities and he is hoping to collect extra information to evaluate them.

Become a volunteer and join like-minded people who care for these areas and want to assist in their maintenance and post fire recovery. To register as a volunteer scan the QR codes below or click on the links. Then select the program you wish to be involved in. Thanks to those members who have already registered.

Friends of Mount
Canobolas SCA
Volunteer Programs



Friends of Borenore Karst Conservation Reserve Programs



Following Jack's talk Helmut shared photos he had taken on the glider surveys. Everyone was delighted to see the Feathertail Glider (see Creature of the Month) and the Greater Gliders with their very long tails. Next year the hours spent doing these surveys should be documented in the Volunteer Information Portal and help NPWS show that the community is interested in protecting and enhancing the biodiversity in two of our local reserves.

<u>Last Excursion</u> – Sunday 14th May. Fungi Forays at Mt Canobolas SCA.

Report by Rosemary Stapleton.

Once again, the fungi forays in Mt Canobolas SCA were very popular with up to 30 people joining each of the morning and afternoon sessions. Along with 7 OFNCS members people had come from many places. Eric and Rowena, from Murrumbidgee Field Nats, were there as were Ruth and Catherine from Cowra and people from places such as Ilford, and Sydney.

Liz Davis, from Central Tablelands LLS welcomed us and Alison Pouliot gave her usual enthusiastic and educational introduction. Participants then formed groups, each with a fungi expert. They surveyed at Orange View and on the Federal Falls track in areas that had not been surveyed before. Details of the fungi and habitat were recorded as before but instead of collecting specimens, photographs of the fungi were uploaded to iNaturalist. This obviously worked well as on Monday Jenny Medd received her regular notification from iNaturalist and was impressed with more than 60 species of fungus added for Mt Canobolas! Their identification will have to be confirmed and hopefully they will make a meaningful contribution to our knowledge of the biodiversity on the mountain.

After several hours of searching the morning groups gathered at the picnic area for some delicious Hungarian mushroom soup. The most exciting or unusual finds were shared with the people who had arrived for the afternoon forays.

Field Nats member Peter Toedter, and his daughter Cindy, joined a foray for the first time. When asked about the foray Peter said 'One of the things that stood out for me was the abundance of fungi when you consciously go looking for them. It took about two hours to

advance 30 metres along the road, only looking a few metres into the scrub. The fungi are tireless recyclers, providing the basics of life to flora and fauna. It was pointed out that each land type has its own compliment of fungi.

What I really appreciated was how Alison explained the derivation of the botanical names to show how the Latin, obscure to most of us, refers to the features of the particular fungus. It was also heartening to see the enthusiasm amongst the young attendees.'



A tiny Agaric fungi and mycelium found in the SCA on a fungi foray. Photo Peter Toedter.

Hai, a veteran foray participant and fungi enthusiast said 'I am just amazed there are still new species to be found. I was happy to see several I haven't seen before, like the peppery coral fungus, Artomyces austropiperatus.' Hai has started a Facebook page Central-Tablelands and Central west fungi group nsw | Facebook



The peppery coral fungus, Artomyces austropiperatus. Photo Hai Wu.

I am sure others at the forays would have agreed with Peter and Hai. Once again Orange Field Nats says thanks to Liz Davis and the CT LLS for organising the Mycology May events.

On Saturday 13th two fungi forays were held in Box Gum Grassy Woodlands at Cowra. This was the second year that Tracee Burke and Mid Lachlan Landcare have held forays. The

morning foray was in a relatively undisturbed woodland, and, for comparison, the afternoon session was in woodland on a farm that had been grazed in the past. Tracee said these 'citizen scientist surveys were making history by collecting data on the fungi in some of our woodland patches.' This is because the fungi in this habitat have not been studied. Alison Pouliot helped with identification and commented how the species found this year were different to those found in 2022.

Tracee explained that 'The data will go into FungiMap via the iNaturalist app to contribute important distribution data. As well as all that important stuff we got to spend a gorgeous autumn day outside. Connecting with nature and connecting with each other. You can't ask for a much better day than that!' Perhaps the large brown snake was an unexpected connection with nature. Locals were so enthused about fungi that they have asked Tracee to hold another foray. It will be in Conimbla National Park in the next week.



A spell bound group listening to Alison at the afternoon fungi foray in Cowra. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Other fungi were found and uploaded to iNaturalist by OFNCS members during velvet worms searches on the Sunday afternoon. Nigel Hobden found what he thinks might be Miller's Oysterling (*Clitopilus hobsonii*). These small fungi (about 5mm < 10mm in diameter) were growing on the decaying timber inside a hollow log.



Possible Miller's Oysterling (Clitopilus hobsonii). Photo Nigel Hobden.

Jenny Medd and I found what we think is Snow or Brain Fungus (*Tremella fuciformis*). Hopefully, some-one will see these observations and confirm the identifications as neither have been listed for Canobolas to date.



Snow or Brain Fungus (Tremella fuciformis). Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

OFNCS Committee News

One focus for Field Nats has been the Arboreal Mammal spotlighting. Read the results in Dick's article that follows. A few surveys outside of the SCA have been done looking for velvet worms with more areas to be searched.

This year OFNCS sponsored the Nature Photography Section at Orange Show. Thirtyone prints were entered and hung on two panels. Information on the society was available. The entries showed nature in many forms from landscapes and sunsets to animals and plants. The results for a large Nature Print (Monochrome or Colour) were:

- First Sharon Ewins , "Good Morning" a print of a reed warbler.
- Second John Olewicz, "Birds and the Bee"
- Highly commended Roxanne Streatfeild, "Lonely" of lone fish in an anemone, and Margie Totman, "Pacific Palm".



We welcome new member James Roth, who joined just in time to join in the glider surveys.

Arboreal Mammal Surveying

Report by Richard Medd.

A team of a dozen trained members recently enthusiastically completed the equivalent of 12 hours of spotlighting of arboreal mammals within Mt Canobolas SCA. Four fixed transects located across the mountain were each surveyed for one hour on each of three nights. In all over 50 animals were sighted, including: 15 Greater Gliders, 9 Common Brushtail Possums, 28 Common Ringtail Possums and ... wait for it... a Feathertail Glider. Only three prior records of Feathertails are recorded for the mountain so all involved felt our efforts were exciting. The overall effort a great success. [Note that The Feathertail Glider is this month's Creature of the Month.]



Greater Glider. Photo Helmut Berndt.

The survey results will be collated into a report and all sightings uploaded to the NSW BioNet Atlas. It is planned to continue the survey annually over the next five years to compile better data about the size and make-up of arboreal mammals within the reserve. Knowledge of the status of populations and how animals are dispersed will assist to understand behaviour, particularly in regard to the endangered Greater Glider.

Southern Boobook Owls were heard and two also seen as well as two families of roosting Laughing Kookaburras.



One of the 28 Common Ringtails spotted. Photo Nigel Hobden.



Kookaburra family keeping warm. Photo Nigel Hobden.

July Talk and Excursion

Thursday 13th July – Dr Cilla Kinross will allow us to look through 'A window on the lives of the CSU Peregrines'.

Sunday 16th July – CSU Peregrines and a visit to some of Cilla's bird survey sites.

Mt Canobolas Update

It is pleasing that the Geographical Names Board has recommended to the government the dual naming of Gaanha bula Mount Canobolas. Wiradjuri Elder Uncle Neil Ingram initiated the process to recognise the cultural history of the mountain. You can read more at https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-12/nsw-government-dual-name-mount-canobolas-gaanha-bula-aboriginal/102333832

Despite it still being autumn, winter came to the mountain with snow closing the roads for a few days at the start of May. Since then some days have been crisp and sunny and on others the winds have been chilly. While it was cool on the nights of the glider surveys the full moon and starry skies were stunning.

NPWS have funded surveys of vegetation at the monitoring plots that were established following the 2018 fire. These surveys will be 5 years after the fire. Along with two previous surveys, these will give an insight into the post fire recovery of the vegetation. They should guide and inform NPWS on vegetation management, burning strategies and fire intervals.

The Federal Falls Walking Track is still closed because of upgrades to the track. It will remain closed until 30 June 2023, however tent camping is still permitted at the Federal Falls Picnic Area.

<u>CWEC Report</u>
Rosemary Stapleton,
OFNCS CWEC Rep.

t centralwest

Stapleton, environment
C Rep. council

Representatives from 11 environmental groups joined the CWEC meeting on May 7 by zoom. Mining was once again a key point of discussion as the Regis McPhillamy's Mine and the Bowden's Silver Lead Mine at Lue had been recently approved by the Independent Planning Commission. These approvals were despite major concerns raised by the affected communities, experts, and environmental groups. Consent conditions rely on management plans yet to be developed by the companies involved.

A few queries relating to water still exist for the McPhillamy's Mine. It is reliant on the wastewater piped from Lithgow however agreements have not yet been signed with the colliery or Mt Piper Power Station. Regis has also not applied for a Special Purpose Access Licence for access to local groundwater. The Regis Board will meet in March 2024 to make a final decision on the mine. If it is to go ahead it will be another 2.5 years for the pipeline to be built and mining commence. The Lue Mine is of concern as it has a tailings dam across a fault line. Action groups at both locations have been watching the developments at Cadia regarding problems with dust suppression.

Coal mines will continue to expand around Mudgee as all the mines have approved expansion plans and will continue until 2036.

The impact of renewable energy projects was also raised by groups, especially those from communities in the Central West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). In the REZ solar and wind farms and transmission lines are being fast tracked. The communities between Dubbo, Wellington and Coolah are struggling to deal assessment process and environmental and social impacts of these projects. The projects are all vying to gain access to two new 500KV transmission lines. Energy Co, a new government corporation, is trying to manage the roll out of these projects. It was interesting to hear that mayors from local councils in the New England REZ were suggesting a different approach. They are lobbying for more solar panels to be installed in Sydney and for microgrids to be established at a community level rather than big projects taking over large areas of food producing land.

The meeting was updated on water issues. The Wyangala Dam wall raising, and Macquarie reregulator weir projects are waiting for final business cases to be released. Regional Water Strategies for the Lachlan and Macquarie Rivers are also yet to be finalised.

The main action from the meeting was to highlight the key environmental issues in the Central West to the Premier and all relevant NSW and Federal Ministers. Specific issues suggested by CCA and OFNCS reps were the dropping of the NPWS Cycling Policy, the need for a decision on the AOBV for Mt Canobolas and strengthening the Biodiversity Conservation legislation.

Since the CWEC meeting funding for the Wyangala Dam project was deferred in the Federal Budget. A final decision is to be made once NSW planning work is complete. After a question in the NSW parliament recently Water Minister Rose Jackson confirmed that the business case for Wyangala had gone to Cabinet. It is currently Cabinet in Confidence but will be released in June after it has been assessed. There has also been an announcement by Minister Penny Sharpe that the REZ timelines and budgets have blown out.

Canobolas Conservation Alliance Update

Report by Jenny Medd

The CCA held a Zoom meeting on May 8th in anticipation of developments issuing from Orange City



Council. We can only report that the Mountain Biking Project does not appear to be a consideration in the current budget projections. The much anticipated briefing for Councillors, requested by Councillor Duffy some time ago, has not yet been presented. Of interest however, has been the lengthy article in the Orange News Examiner, which can still accessed https://www.orangenewsexaminer.com.au/pos t/inside-story-the-mountain-the-elders-andthe-cyclists-is-100km-trail-a-dream-or-anightmare. Contact has been made with the new Minister, Penny Sharpe, with an invitation to visit Mt Canobolas.

Dates for your Diary

2023 Cowra Woodland Bird Survey dates are July 15/16, October 14/15, and February 17/18 2024. Contact Sue Proust for more information or to register for surveying at sueproust@bigpond.com.

In autumn 2024 the CWB Program aims to start a large-scale ambitious revegetation project on 'Spring Forest'. Many hands will be needed to help with planting, guarding, and watering in thousands of shrubs and trees.

Conferences. Members have been sent emails with details of these conferences or click on the hyperlinks below.

NCC <u>Regional Conference</u> in Albury on 24/25 June.

2023 Regional water or <u>River reflections</u> conference on 14/15 June in Narrabri.

Birdlife Southern NSW's AGM featured presentations which can be watched online:

Matt Herring: Bitterns in Rice Project

Sue Proust: Cowra Woodland Birds Program

Mick Roderick: Regent Honeyeater

Bird Species recently listed as Threatened.

Julian Reid in Cowra Comments, the newsletter of the Cowra Woodland Bird Program, noted that 'several plants and animals were recently listed as nationally Vulnerable or Endangered under the EPBC Act. Notable additions to the Endangered list were the 'south-eastern Australian Hooded

Robin and the eastern subspecies of Major Mitchell's Cockatoo. Newly listed Vulnerable birds included south-eastern Australian Brown Treecreeper, Southern Whiteface, and Diamond Firetail. He noted that recently several of the surveyors have observed that sightings of Hooded Robin and Southern Whiteface, in particular, have become rare around Cowra.'

Sightings around Orange

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

Plants

Corybas leaves and a spent flower were seen in the native forest and snow grass in Canobolas State Forest. Greenhood rosettes were also seen there and a different one along a track in the SCA.

Diplodium ampliatum flowers were seen on a quick visit to Conimbla National Park before the fungi foray.

Things with Wings

Male Scarlet Robins have been posing for Nigel Sethack at the State Forest/Archery Range off Lower Lewis Ponds Rd. On May 19 he also saw a Varied Sitella. The Robin was hunting insects and on another visit he took the photo below.



A vigorous mating display with a male and female **Musk Duck** (below) was captured by Nigel Hobden at Spring Creek Reservoir on May 23. How odd is the male's posture.



Rosemary had some good sightings in the flowering Ironbarks on the roadside just before Conimbla National Park. They included a female Scarlet Robin, Brown Treecreeper and Diamond Firetails, all listed as vulnerable. There was also a Jacky Winter, Red-browed Finches, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, and the air was filled with Noisy Friarbird calls. Not bad for birding from the car.

Different types of **Yellow Planarian Worms** have been seen quite often in the SCA and surrounding areas this month. The plain yellow ones and the yellow ones with multiple stripes were 'actively' moving across one of the glider survey transects. These two types also been seen on fungi and velvet worm surveys. And one with only two dark stripes has also been found (below). Could it be a different species?



Creature of the Month

Narrow-toed Feathertail Glider (*Acrobates pygmaeus*). Text by Rosemary Stapleton.

The exciting and rare sighting of a Feathertail Glider on one of the spotlighting transects meant it just had to feature as the Creature of the Month.

Acrobates pygmaeus, Narrow-toed Feathertail Glider. The scientific name for this species means pygmy acrobat! It has several other common names including Pygmy Gliding Possum, Pygmy Glider and Flying Mouse. Peter and Judy Smith note there is a second species, the Broad-toed Feathertail Glider (Acrobates frontalis), that has been recognised by Harris in 2015 based on unpublished genetic studies and cryptic morphological differences in toe and tail characteristics.

On seeing Helmut's photos, below, Peter and Judy said 'To our knowledge, your feathertail glider record is only the fourth record for Mt Canobolas and the first since 2007. But of course, it's a small inconspicuous species that may well be more common in the reserve than

the few records suggest. The distinct white margins of the tail suggest that the animal you saw was a Narrow-toed Feathertail Glider Acrobates pygmaeus rather than a Broad-toed Feathertail Glider A. frontalis. However, the Broad-toed FG can sometimes also have a white margin to the tail, so you need to get a good look at the toes to confirm the identification. In Helmut's photos the toes are a bit too blurry to tell if they're broad or narrow. One of the three earlier records was an old undated Australian Museum specimen (probably collected in the 1920s-40s) that has been identified as a Narrow-toed FG. The other two records are sightings and were not distinguished as Narrow-toed or Broad-toed.'



The tiny Narrow-toed Feathertail Glider that at first seemed to be scurrying along a branch like a mouse. Photo Helmut Berndt.

The Feathertail Glider is the smallest gliding mammal in the world with an average weight of only 12-15 g and length of 6-8cm. The tail is about the same length as the head and body combined. The sexes are similar in size and appearance.

It is distinguished from other small marsupials by its feather-like tail fringed with long stiff hairs, which acts as a rudder during flight. The fur is soft and silky and is a uniform greyish brown on the upper body, and white on the underside. The ears are moderately large and rounded. The glider also has an unusually large number of whiskers, sprouting from the snout and cheeks, and from the base of each ear. A

gliding membrane, which extends from its elbows to its knees, allows the animal to steer, brake and glide more than 20 m between trees. It moves very swiftly racing along limbs of trees and leaping through the uppermost foliage. It takes alarm at slight provocation and may 'freeze' for several minutes.

The gliders are highly adept climbers and with their large serrated toe pads can cling to the smooth trunks of eucalyptus trees. They are even known to climb vertical panes of glass, as their feet act as suction cups. I assume you can still see this at their enclosure at Taronga Zoo.



Another view of the Narrow-toed Feathertail Glider. Photo Helmut Berndt.

The Feathertail Glider lives in all types of forests and woodlands and is found in eastern Australia from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria to South Australia. It feeds on pollen, nectar, manna and insects and sometimes hunts in shrubby thickets or over the trunks of roughbarked trees. Predators of the Feathertail Glider include currawongs, kookaburras, bats, antechinus, foxes and cats.

These gliders are arboreal, and although they do occasionally descend to the ground to forage, they spend as much as 87% of their time over 15 m (49 ft) above the ground, particularly in eucalyptus trees. This is

probably one of the reasons why they are not often seen.

As they are nocturnal, they spend the day resting in nests in tree hollows, lined with leaves or shredded bark. They are social animals, and up to five may share a single nest, especially during the breeding season. These gliders do not hibernate as such but can enter torpor during cold weather at any time of the year. Torpor can last for several days, when they curl into a ball, wrapping their tail around themselves and folding their ears flat, often huddling together to keep warm and conserve energy.

The breeding season usually lasts from July to January. They give birth to up to four young and will usually have two litters a year, which are weaned at about 105 days. Females breed with several males and litters can be sired by different fathers. The female's pouch opens towards the front and contains four teats. The young remain in the pouch for the first 65 days of life, and the animals can live to between five and eight years.

Neither species of Feathertail Glider are listed as threatened. It was featured on the reverse of the Australian 1-cent coin until 1991 when the coin was discontinued. Taronga Zoo was the first zoo to breed feathertail gliders in captivity and have sent animals to overseas zoos, the first being in Poland.

It was a special moment for the four surveyors to watch this tiny animal while spotlighting.

To see how cute they are take a look at <u>Taronga Zoo Youtube</u> or a baby at the <u>Australian Reptile Park</u> although it doesn't seem to have much of a feather tail.

Information obtained from:

Strahan, R, ed. (1983), The Australian Museum Complete Book of Australian Mammals, London; Sydney: A&R. https://australian.museum/learn/animals/mammals/feathertail-glider/. Accessed May 2023. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feathertail_glide

r Accessed May 2023. https://www.reptilepark.com.au/feathertail-glider/ Accessed May 2023.

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Other species seen on the arboreal mammal spotlighting surveys.



Left: A Common Brushtail Possum. This species was only seen on one of the four transects. Photo Nigel Hobden.

Right: A Southern Boobook, also only seen or heard on one of the transects. 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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