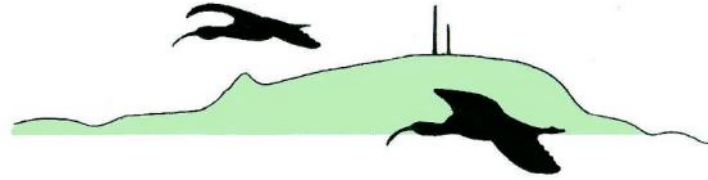


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2024

Thursday 14th March, 7.30 pm.
The recovery of nature at Glen Davis
Speaker - Eric Tanner.

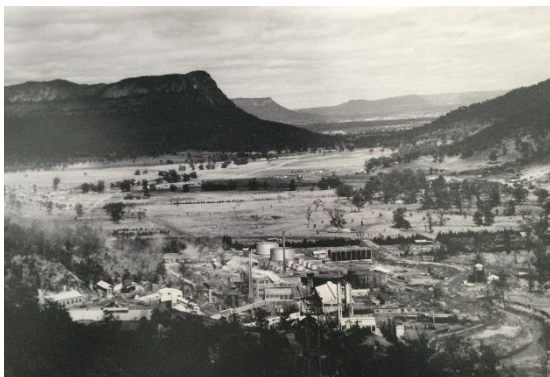
Face to face at Nguluway Ngurang Senior
Citizens Centre North Room
(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

Excursion
Sunday 17th March,
Capertee Valley and Glen Davis.
8.00 am start

Next Meeting

Thursday 14th March, 7.30 pm.
The recovery of nature at Glen Davis.
Speaker - Eric Tanner.

Eric aims to show people the wonderful resilience of nature following the enormity of the disturbance of the open cut shale oil mines at Glen Davis in the 1950s. He knows the area well and will tell us about what everyday life was like in the Glen. Mining ceased in 1952. Eric will bring fact sheets and copies of photos taken during mining and in recent times.



The Glen in the 1950s. We'll see how it has changed on the excursion.

Next Excursion – Sunday 17th March,
Capertee Valley and Glen Davis.

This will be a very full day trip. Meet at the Orange High School bus bay at **8.00 am**, an hour earlier than usual. 4WDs would be

preferred but are not essential and car-pooling is encouraged.

The excursion will highlight what Eric spoke about in his talk. We will drive by Ben Bullen and the enormous open cut mines of the 1950s, then to the Capertee lookout to see the panorama of the world's second largest canyon. Next will be a drive into the Glen past the Regent Honeyeater support properties and around the old town to see how it has disappeared under nature. After a stop at the lookout above the oil-works we will go into Wollemi National Park at confluence of Coorongooaba Creek and the Capertee River. There will be toilet stops at Capertee, Glen Davis, and Wollemi. The trip home will be via Glen Alice and Sofala.



Capertee Crossing. Photo Eric Tanner.

BYO everything – food, water, and drinks. Please wear sturdy footwear, long sleeve shirts and pants and insect repellent. A jumper might be a good idea if the weather is cool.

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 8th February, 7.30 pm.

There was a good attendance at the AGM despite lots of apologies including from Dick and Jenny Medd. Their absence meant we had to postpone the presentation to them of Honorary Life Membership of the Society.

Geoff Selwood presented his president's report:

Thank you all for attending this evening and all of the meetings and excursions that you have attended during the year.

The past 12 months have been very busy with the continued work being conducted by members eking out the secrets of Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas. The work done in the State Conservation Area is paying off in ways that most of you would not normally have any knowledge of. For example, the Bush Fire Management Committee are now re-doing their Risk Management Plan for the four local government areas. The information that has been gained has enabled the SCA to be classified as a focus area due to the high-quality flora – fauna information that is now available.

A huge thank you to the guest speakers and the excursion leaders who have done a fantastic job ensuring the ideals of the society are being met.

The highlight of the year surely must have been the launch of the book 'Orchids of Central Western NSW' by Col and Dick and the team that assisted with the publication. This was money well spent with very positive feedback from all over the state.

Thank you to Rosemary for all the work that she does in the background which ensures that everyone is kept up to date with what is happening and enabling everyone to have input into what is happening in respect of the environment in the Central West via the newsletter.

Thank you also to all the members that send in articles and photos to the newsletter editor making each edition more of a well worth while publication to read each month. Thank you to the Committee and everyone for doing your bit and spreading the word about the Society which can be seen in the increasing membership each year.

After the Treasurer's Report was accepted the elections were held with Tony Caine as Returning Officer. All the previous executive were elected with Geoff Selwood as President and Nigel Hobden as Vice-President. Rosemary Stapleton continues as Secretary and Newsletter Editor, Jenny Pratten as Publicity

Officer and Dick and Jenny Medd as Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, respectively.

Helmut Berndt, Peter Toedter, and Alison Ford were happy to continue as committee members and we welcome Eric Tanner and Jane Paul to the committee.

The meeting agreed that membership fees would remain the same.

The AGM formalities were followed by a presentation of recent photographs submitted by members. They ranged from close ups of insects, flowers and lichen to wonderful birds and stunning landscapes that had been visited by members during the year.



*Willie Wagtail chicks in Cilla's garage.
Photo Cilla Kinross.*



*Red-necked Avocets at a wetland near Ivanhoe.
Photo Nigel Sethack.*



Lichen at the Falls Lookout, Mullion Range SCA. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

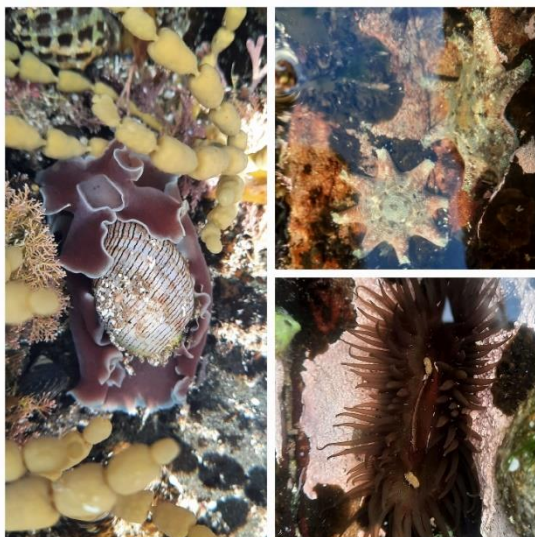
The photos showed the diversity of nature in different habitats and landscapes, not just locally but across NSW and to Tasmania. There are just too many great photos to showcase them all here. Thanks to Jenny M, Cilla, Alison, Tony and Penny, Rosemary and Cath, Nigel, Sebastien, and Helmut. Peter rounded off the night with a short video about people who claim ‘rocks’ they have found are likely to be artefacts. Most people had an idea of who this might be hinting at, and it caused lots of laughs. Some of landscape photos are at the end of the newsletter.



Kangaroos in the dawn light at Mookawah, Burrendong Dam. Photo Tony Caine.



Fur Seals in Tasmania. Photo Sebastien Comte.



Creatures of rock pools at Gerringong. Photos Nigel Hobden.

Last Excursion – 11th February.

Picnic at Orange Botanic Gardens followed by spotlighting in the gardens.

Text by Rosemary Stapleton.

On Sunday afternoon Orange seemed to be surrounded by storms. While the airport had recorded 60mm no rain had fallen in Orange, so Nigel thought it was worth chancing the picnic and spotlighting. Most people who said they were coming agreed and sixteen people came. A walker in the gardens asked what we were doing and if she could join. It was Nav who obviously enjoyed the evening as when asked she sent me her feedback. You can read a shortened version below.



Sunset from the gardens. Photo R Stapleton.

Before heading out we watched a magnificent sunset that lit up the sky and the trees with deep red light. Nigel outlined how to spotlight for the safety of animals and humans. By miraculous coincidence, whilst Nigel was talking about what we would be likely to see a Brushtail Possum dropped out of a nearby weeping elm and headed out for its nightly forage.



A Liquid Amber glowing red from the light of the sunset. Photo Tony Caine.

Nigel led one group past the Function Centre and Sandra and Glen lead another group along the paths in the other direction. The first sighting with Nigel was a Grey-headed Flying Fox landing in one of the eucalypts and then another Brushie, the first of 23 that the group saw. Other animals seen were an occasional microbat, a Spotted Marsh Frog, and four rats climbing around in a clump of Australian Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) presumably foraging for seeds.



One of the rats in the Acacia. Photo Hai Wu.

I think we had all given up on seeing a glider but just before we arrived back at the Function Centre Nigel picked up the eyes of a small glider [likely to have been a Sugar Glider (*Petaurus breviceps*)] crouched along a branch in a Black Wattle (*Acacia decurrens*).



The small glider spotted in a Black Wattle. In the lower photo you can see its folded gliding membrane. Photos Nigel Hobden.

Sandra and Glen were glad to have recovered sufficiently from a canyoning trip to join in. Sandra said 'Our group got very strung out -

Glen out in front, Helmut out the back and a considerable amount of friendly chatter in between. Our possum count was 15 Brushtail Possums. There was also another Spotted Marsh Frog, two Kookaburras, several other birds that weren't identifiable and a dinosaurnot real'.



Nav wrote 'I was finishing my regular evening walk at the Botanic Gardens when I saw a lively group of people getting ready for a field trip. My curiosity got the better of me and I stopped and asked what the event was. I received the most welcoming smile and was introduced to the OFNCS. Here I was about to walk back home, and then I found myself on an impromptu night field trip to survey local possums, gliders, and birds. I was with a group of such interesting and welcoming people who share a joy of living and care for nature and other living beings. In half an hour I had sighted more possums (#5-6) plus some birds (including a pair of Kookaburras - which were not too amused by human interest) compared to what I ever had encountered in one night excursion before. All in all, it turned out to be a great evening. I got to see a different side of my backyard (Botanic Gardens) and got to meet a great bunch of like-minded nature-loving people in Orange. I was so impressed with the kindness and consideration of OFNCS members. I knew that I have finally found my tribe and I was hooked. I have now joined as a member and look forward to enjoying many more nature excursions and learning more about local flora and fauna. Bring it on!'

I agree with Nav. It was a wonderfully still evening in a great location with good company. It was so enjoyable there was even discussion about doing it again.



The spotlighters, left to right Nav, Hai, Sandra, Nigel, Helen, Helmut, Tony, Penny, Ann, Glen, and Marc. Absent are Kerry and Margaret and Jane came for the picnic. Photo R Stapleton.

OFNCS Committee News

The OFNCS publicity postcard has been updated. If anyone would like copies please email orangefieldnats@gmail.com. Some have been placed at the library.

On the 19th February Rosemary represented Orange Field Nats at the community consultation on Orange City Council's five-year economic development plan. With Nick King, representing ECCO, we put forward the need to protect the great natural environment around Orange and prevent biodiversity loss. With the predominant attitude of continued growth and expansion we argued for a sustainable future at a time when the impacts of climate change are obvious. In particular, we highlighted the challenge of ensuring a reliable water supply without taking more water from creeks and rivers. Phil Stevenson, who was representing the Historical Society, also highlighted many environmental issues.

If you haven't already done so remember to give feedback to Orange Council on the future development of the **Bloomfield Health Precinct**. The "Your Say" survey closes on 8th March. You will find the survey at

[Unlocking the Bloomfield Health Precinct | Your Say Orange \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/your-say-orange)

April Talk and Excursion

Thursday 11th April – Birds of Kakadu National Park and Darwin with Nigel Sethack.

In June last year Nigel spent 3 days at Corroboree Creek Billabong, in Kakadu NP, and then another few days in the Darwin region. He took many bird photos, some of which he will share as well as giving a brief outline of the photography equipment he used and his basic bird photography methodology.

Sunday 14th April - Exploring Bald Hill with Col Bower.

Col will lead the excursion to Bald Hill, which is in the State Forest due south of Mt Towac. It features open bare rock platform areas with heath and interesting rock formations. We will also explore a large patch of native woodland to the east and have lunch in an open grassy area near a rocky ridgeline with good quality native groundcover.

CWEC AGM

4th February 2024

Report by R Stapleton

centralwest
environment
council

Nigel Hobden and I represented Field Nats at this meeting in Bathurst, with Nick King representing ECCO. Cilla Kinross and Jane Paul were there as individual members.

At the AGM Nick was re-elected President and Bev Smiles Secretary. Cathy Marchant stood down as Treasurer and was replaced by Cilla. Mel Gray, Healthy Rivers Dubbo, was elected Vice President.

Nick's President's Report showed that CWEC had been very active in 2023. The main focus was on new and existing mines and their impact on the environment and health but also water, which he noted is also often an issue with any mining development.

At the general meeting there was discussion on the need for CWEC to keep up to date on the review of the Commonwealth EPBC Act as well as the review of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act. CWEC members will be told of opportunities to comment. Submissions about the EPBC Act are due on 30th March. You can find out more at <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/australias-new-nature-positive-laws>

An issue to highlight if you make a submission is the cumulative effect of mining, especially in the largely cleared Central West. Under the current legislation offsets don't work (as suitable offsets are not available) or promises to offset via rehabilitation are not 'like for like' or are just not done. An example is Bowden's Mine at Lue where the mine has been approved yet the company hasn't been able to find a suitable offset.

The main discussion on water was about use of recycled water as potable drinking water. Sydney Water is working on this, and Orange, Bathurst and Tamworth have been identified as places that will be facing water supply shortages. Bev Smiles said a community group in Tamworth had moved into this work soon after the recent Dungowan Dam extension proposal was rejected. Use of potable water is in all the Regional Water Strategies. Cilla agreed to continue to be involved in the community meetings being held on the review of the Murray Darling Basin Plan and will keep CWEC updated.

Jane reported that the Friends of Burrendong Arboretum have decided to keep the gardens open for another 3 months. They will try to secure more funding for maintenance and operation.

Canobolas Conservation Alliance Update

Report by Jenny Pratten.

The Canobolas Conservation Alliance (CCA) held its AGM by Zoom on February 12th.



Andrew Rawson was re-elected as President and Jenny Pratten as Secretary/Treasurer. Helmut Berndt, who has been a committee member since the Alliance started, was elected as Vice-President. Rosemary Stapleton, Nick King, and Robert McLaughlin continue as committee members. They are joined this year by Denis Marsh and Deborah Kwa.

Jenny Medd and Sandra Chrystall both declined re-nomination and special thanks was given to them for their advocacy for Mt Canobolas State Conservation Area (SCA).

Membership fees for 2024 were set at \$5.

An article in ABC News 22/2/23 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-21/plans-stall-for-mountain-bike-track-in-nsw-central-west/103487846> suggested the bike trails had been stalled indefinitely due to lack of funds available in Orange City Council's budget for further environmental assessments. However, it was reported in the CWD 28/2/23 that several councillors have confirmed plans to bring the project back before colleagues this year to finalise a decision on its future.

CCA President, Andrew Rawson replied with a press release stating the end of the mountain biking project in Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas is a win for common sense. Andrew said:

'CCA have consistently highlighted to Council that the State Significant Development (SSD) application would be very expensive to deliver and unlikely to succeed due to the extremely high biodiversity and Indigenous heritage values of the SCA. OCC have not budgeted any money towards this project for the last two years, so the abandonment of the SSD proposal does not come as a surprise. Within tight budgetary constraints, Orange Council has

quite rightly sought to focus on higher priority projects within its own Local Government Area.'

Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas Update

There is always something different to see whenever visiting the mountain. On 15th February a group of six Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were foraging low in acacias on the slopes of Watts Pinnacle. There didn't appear to be seed pods on the acacias so I was unsure what they were eating.



Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo seen on Mt Canobolas Rd. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

NPWS is undertaking more improvements to the Federal Falls Walking Track. This has resulted in some areas being closed to allow helicopter long line lift operations. The helicopter will be lifting large bags of building material and gravel to aid in the construction of the walking track and stairs.

Areas closed are Federal Falls Campground and walking track, Towac Way, Snowgum Track, and the Mt Towac Track. These closures will **apply until Friday 8 March 2024.**

For the most up to date information, please contact the Central West Area Office in Bathurst on 02 6332 7640.

Dates for your Diary

2024 Cowra Woodland Bird Survey dates are April 6/7, July 27/28, and October 19/20. Contact Sue Proust for more information or to register for surveying at sueproust@bigpond.com

Mycology May is happening again but in a slightly different format. Liz Davis is co-ordinating a program with Alison Pouliot here from 1st to 6th May. Intrepid Landcare are also planning to host an event on the Mycology May Program. The LLS have also started to plan activities for another **Biodiversity Month** in September. Details will be in future newsletters.

Dubbo Field Naturalist and Conservation Society Events. For details and times email contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au

OFNCS members are welcome to join DFN excursions to **Burrendong Arboretum** on

- Sunday 21st April
- Sunday 26th May
- Sunday 21st July.

On Tuesday 17th September at 7pm **Col Bower will be speaking on 'Orchids of Central Western NSW'** in Dubbo. DFN hopes to visit Orange the following Sunday, 22nd September, to look at orchid locations around Orange. Details will be circulated closer to the date.

Sightings around Orange

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

Things with Wings

A **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** (below) was photographed by Ian Roth in his garden at Borrodell Drive on 28th January.



At Spring Creek Reservoir an adult and juvenile **Buff-banded Rail** crossed the track just in front of Nigel Sethack on 18th February. Had they been breeding at Spring Creek?



A juvenile Buff-banded Rail. Photo N Sethack.

Several **Black-shouldered Kites** have been seen around the Orange district with one

staying at the southern end of Ploughmans Wetland for at least 10 days.

On 1st March five **White-throated Needletails** were seen by Col Bower when walking in Somerset Park. They are listed as **vulnerable** under the Commonwealth EPBC Act. These summer migrants may have come from anywhere between the Himalayas and Japan.

Fungi

Moisture from the recent rain at Spring Terrace has been great for the fungi. Sandra Chrystall was delighted to spot and photograph, in her garden on 19th February, the brilliant red colour of some Ruby Bonnets - *Cruentomycena viscidocruenta* (below).



Tiger Snake - If you have read the Orange City Life magazine of February 22-28 you would have seen that local snake catcher and OFNCS member Jake Hanson had been called to remove a Tiger Snake from a house in Clifton Grove. To his surprise it was actually a Tiger Snake as in his almost 20 years of snake catching in the Orange district he had never seen one in the area before. The article quoted Jake saying that if you '*drive a half hour away to the east you will find plenty of Tiger Snakes*'.

Mosses and Liverworts

Scientist and OFNCS member Alison Downing recently sent to Dick Medd the species list of the specimens she gathered during the excursion on 15th October.

Alison had collected around 30 specimens of moss and a liverwort during the excursion and afterwards at a damp area at Boshes Creek in Northern Mullion. It appears these are areas for which there is a paucity of bryophyte records, and these are important additions. Alison said most species were predictable although she was pleased to find *Orthotrichum cupulatum*, as it isn't particularly common. Specimens have been added to the Downing Herbarium, at

Macquarie University, and any duplicate specimens have mostly been lodged with the NSW Herbarium so will eventually be uploaded to ALA.

If you would like to see the list, please email orangefieldnats@gmail.com

Storm Damage – trees in and around Toogong were devastated by a storm cell probably on 29th February when Manildra was also hit.



Creature of the Month – Grey-headed Flying Fox. Text and photos by Nigel Hobden.

February is one of the months of the year when the Grey-headed Flying-fox (GHFF - *Petropus poliocephalus*) national counts are undertaken. There are four species of Flying-fox or megabats native to Australia. Along with the GHFF, there are the Little Red Flying-fox, Spectacled Flying-fox, and Black Flying-fox. There is also the Christmas Island Flying-fox which is endemic to this island. Flying-foxes are nectar and fruit eating megabats that are critical to the dispersal and pollination of plants along the eastern seaboard of Australia. They are renowned for the immense distances they fly to forage, dispersing rainforest seeds and pollinating flowering trees.

Initially a brief site inspection is undertaken for the count to determine if a camp is occupied or vacant. If occupied, a count can be undertaken on one of three dates and it aims to gauge an estimated number of this nationally and NSW listed vulnerable species. Nigel, in his role with Council, undertook a count on Friday 16 February of both the Ploughmans Lane and Cook Park camps.

At the Ploughmans Lane camp there were a number of mothers with young pups. They were possibly ones still carried on the mother's chest, when she heads out for her nightly foraging activities. The number of pups is great news considering the number of newly born (furless) and very young pups that were abandoned by their mothers and picked up by

staff earlier in the season at the Cook Park camp.



Two young pups independent of their mothers at Ploughmans Lane. Photo Nigel Hobden.

During the Ploughmans Lane camp count Nigel noticed an individual with a tracking collar. This was reported to one of the Senior Project Officers of the Biodiversity and Conservation Unit of the Dept. of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water who forwarded the details to Western Sydney University's Justin Welbergen for tracking information. At the time of writing this article a response has not yet been received. If information is received on the tracked individual this will be disseminated to OFNCS members.



The Grey-headed Flying-fox with the tracker attached. Photo Nigel Hobden.

The count for Ploughmans Lane in February was estimated at 850 individuals (adults) and for Cook Park 1350 individuals.



Alpine flora, Carruthers Peak, Kosciuszko National Park. Photo Helmut Berndt.



The Milky Way at Lake Crosbie, Murray Sunset National Park. Photo Nigel Hobden.

To join please pay by **EFT to:** BSB 802 129 Account 100014678 OFN & Cons Soc Inc
 Please identify payments with your name and send confirmation of the payment to
orangefieldnats@gmail.com
 If you do not use EFT, you can pay by cash at a meeting or at Orange Credit Union.

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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.

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