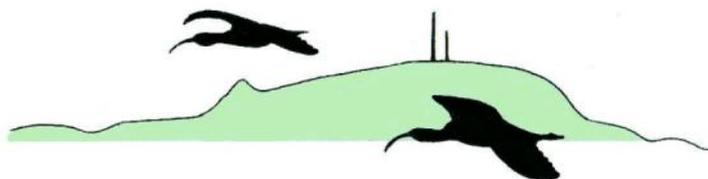


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2018

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 11th October, 7.30pm

SPEAKER: Helmut Berndt
TOPIC: Walking in Lamington National Park and the Blue Mountains

NEW VENUE: Home and Community Care Centre (HACC Centre),
286-290 Lords Place
(corner Lords Place & March Street – enter from Lords Place)

Committee Meeting at 6.30
All members are welcome

EXCURSION

Sunday, 14th October
Gosling Creek Reserve
Meet 9am at the Orange High Bus Bay

Next Meeting

Helmut Berndt is a passionate photographer and will show highlights of his recent trip to Lamington National Park with the Central West Bushwalking Club. He will also showcase three iconic day-walks in the Blue Mountains. Helmut says these will be in an audio-visual format, so feel free to bring nibbles. Helmut will talk about the gear he takes for bushwalking and some of the technical issues when photographing in rainforests.

Next Excursion – Gosling Creek Reserve

Orange City Council has a proposal on exhibition about the 'Recreational use of Gosling Creek, Spring Creek and Suma Park Dams'. The excursion will be to Gosling Creek to look at the areas where new activities are being proposed. Dick Medd will lead this short excursion. Bring something for a relaxing morning tea. Council's proposal can be found at <https://www.orange.nsw.gov.au/on-exhibition-for-comment/>

Last Meeting

Topic: Feral Pigs in Australia

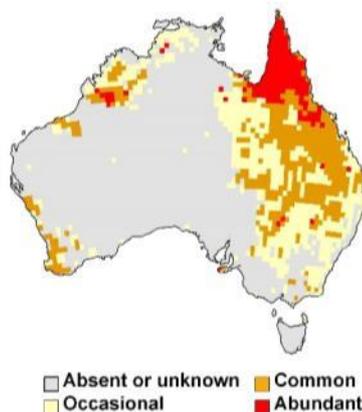
Speaker: Andrew Bengsen, Vertebrate Pest Research Unit, DPI based at Orange Agricultural Institute.

Summary by Rosemary Stapleton, images from Andrew.

Andrew is certainly an expert on feral pigs and we all came away much better informed. Since 2004 he has been researching them in many areas of Australia. He talked about the what, where, why and how of feral pigs and their control.

Feral pigs in Australia are truly feral as they are all descended from European and Asian domestic stock that have gone wild. Pigs were brought to Australia with the First Fleet and while other livestock struggled the pigs thrived. Seven years later they were the first animal to have control measures introduced as they were damaging gardens and the food supply of the colony. They were also introduced to other places by whalers and sailors and to Melville Island in 1824.

By 1947 feral pigs were found mainly in north Queensland and this is where they are still most abundant. Wet periods in the 1950's saw their range expand significantly and they are now found from sub-alpine to semi-arid and tropical areas, as show on the map.



Feral pigs are extremely adaptable and are well suited to conditions in Australia as they survive where food is unpredictable and can ride out dry times. Their range expansion is likely to continue, especially into north

western Australia, with the development of large-scale irrigation schemes.

Most feral pigs are black although there are spotty and patterned ones. They tend to live in family groups of differing size, of up to 100 in the Cape, although the boars can be solitary. Andrew said it is hard to predict where feral pigs will be and what they will do as their density and behaviour is highly variable. One constant is their need for daily access to water so a lack of water can restrict where they forage.

Pigs also need a good source of protein with sows needing 15% protein in their diet to produce young. One reason for their success is that they can breed year-round and have 2 litters in 12 -14 months. Litters can be up to 12 piglets, but juvenile mortality is high and usually only 4-8 survive. They generally start to breed at 10-14 months of age but in good conditions they can breed at 7 months.

Andrew explained why pigs need to be controlled; they are ecosystem engineers as their foraging changes the environment and the nutrient balance in the soil and spread weed seeds. They damage freshwater lagoons impacting on frogs, macropods and fish and elsewhere 'hoover' around and eat lizards, ground nesting bird's eggs and turtle hatchlings.



They can be a major pest of agriculture by damaging cereal crops through to bananas, can take up to 30% of lambs and spread disease such as *Lepto pomona*. In semi-arid areas pigs infect watering points that are essential for livestock. Feral pigs also pose a major future risk if Foot and Mouth Disease ever comes to Australia.

Another risk is for feral pig hunters who may contract Brucellosis after exposure to *Brucella suis* from carcasses or through their dogs. Pigs also damage Aboriginal cultural sites yet conversely, they are sometimes valued as they provide a source of meat and allow Aboriginal people to go hunting on country.

Management of the feral pig population is a challenge as their occurrence is unpredictable, sporadic, changes every year and is uneven throughout the landscape. The aim of any control program is to reduce the population to an acceptably low level and knock it down again when the population starts to increase. To do this any program must remove more pigs than their survival and reproductive capacity so 70% of the population must be removed each year. Because of their breeding success it is best to eliminate the young animals to achieve population control. Eradication on the Australian mainland is not possible.

Currently the methods used are baiting with 1080, aerial shooting in open landscapes and trapping to mop up those that are left. Studies of commercial harvesting have shown this method rarely controls populations. Likewise, Andrew's research in forests at Neville and Oberon has shown hunting has little effect. Fencing is also not an option as it is expensive and difficult to maintain.

New control tools that are being investigated in NSW are meat baiting and use of sodium nitrite, which is perceived to be a lot more humane than 1080. Biological control is not being considered because of the risk to domestic pigs.

Andrew highlighted the complexity of control as methods need to be adapted to each location with different combinations being effective in different situations. He concluded that control was an ongoing challenge as even if pig number have been brought down to an acceptable level it is always difficult to keep the numbers down.

Last Excursion

Mt Canobolas SCA Clean Up

From Rosemary Stapleton and Jenny Medd

After reading the weather forecast I imagine Dick Medd would have been thinking, 'Oh no, not snow again' as the clean-up had already been postponed twice in August. However, the day dawned cloudless and sunny with a stunning clear blue sky. With approval from NPWS six members donned hi-viz vests and hard hats, gloves and coats and started the clean-up at Orange View Lookout. The devastation of the fire was obvious with most of the heath gone. A chilly wind blew from the south through the gap, so we didn't search in the trees. Those of us who headed onto the northern slope had some protection and got quite hot in all our gear. We combed the bare

area and picked up mainly shards of broken glass but also the occasional can and a rusted wheel rim. It seems that this area has always been a popular place for ‘discarding’ bottles as there were lots of thicknesses and several different colours of glass.

Birds could be heard calling and it was good to see several female Flame Robins hawking from the dead stems of the burnt shrubs. These are one of the threatened species found in the SCA. Cilla spotted a skink, but it moved too fast to identify; there were a few ants and lady beetles around. An occasional seedling is growing however very little of the original heath appears to be reshooting.

As Dick had a key and approval for us to enter closed off areas, we then headed to Federal Falls Picnic Area for morning tea. The fire had been kept away from the immediate vicinity of the picnic tables and mature trees. The birds seemed to appreciate this as there were lots about, with Yellow-faced Honeyeaters gleaning the leaves of the untouched eucalypts along with a White-naped Honeyeater. A Grey Shrike Thrush was hopping through the adjacent burnt area. We enjoyed our cuppas sitting in the warm sun among all this activity.

Next stop was the Walls to collect more rubbish (photo below).



If we thought Orange View was badly burnt, it was even more devastating at the Walls Lookout. The lichen and heath community had suffered very badly, and the view east showed that similar damage had occurred to other heath areas and ridges that we had walked last spring and marvelled at the flowers. Some plants were re-establishing with Pelargonium, Violet and Desmodium spotted as well as numerous well-chewed lilies and lots of epicormic growth on the eucalypts, notably on the endemic, *E. canobolensis*. More bottles, broken and whole, along with other rubbish were collected from the slopes.

Cilla and Nick had to leave early, so after more collecting the rest of us went back to the picnic area for lunch. While still sunny a very lazy wind had come up and most of the birds had wisely moved on. As well as seeing parties of hikers, we unfortunately had the peace and quiet disrupted by a group of trail-bike riders roaring along Towac Way past the Walls area, in spite of locked gates.

Dick and Jenny continued to collect rubbish around the Mitchell’s Way junction, where Jenny spotted a Jacky lizard among the rocks, while Rosemary and Hai Wu went to the summit to see that the fire had come quite close to the communications towers. These were a popular backdrop for photos for the 5 or 6 groups of visitors that were there.

Our 3 hours of effort resulted in about 10 bags of rubbish, including a golf club, wheel rim and a hub, a few sheets of corrugated iron and a ten cent coin. Thanks to all concerned for making these parts of the SCA a safer and cleaner environment.



Some of the rubbish from the Walls area

Bird List – OV= Orange View, FF = Federal Falls Picnic Area

Yellow-faced Honeyeater	OV,FF
Crimson Rosella	OV, FF
Spotted Pardalote	OV, FF
Grey Fantail	OV, FF
Pied Currawong	OV, FF
Flame Robin	OV
Sulphur Crested Cockatoo	OV
Australian Raven	OV
Australian Magpie	FF
Grey Shrike Thrush	FF
Laughing Kookaburra	FF
Wedge-tailed Eagle (overhead)	F
Striated Pardalote	FF
White-naped Honeyeater	FF
White-throated Treecreeper	FF

Linnean Society Symposium - 25-27th Sept 2018, Coonabarabran. *From Dick Medd, photos from Rosemary*

Held over three days in Coonabarabran the Symposium featured 26 formal presentations by speakers from various Government agencies, Universities, Landcare and consultants over two days followed by a field excursion on the third. One couldn't help but be impressed by the extent of scientific effort devoted to the Warrumbungles post the 2013 devastating fire and flooding. Topics covered geology [resulting in a new geological map for the area] the ins and outs of volcanoes [fascinating], erosion and mass movements, various slants on fire and effects on tree hollows, vegetation recovery, animal ecology including the state of koalas and effects on birds, bats and reptiles. A smattering of other presentations covered aspects of endemism in snails on Mt Kaputar and plants from various volcanic sites including Mt Canobolas. Most encouraging of all was to see the body of young scientists both presenting and in the audience of around 85 delegates. A Proceedings of contributions will be forthcoming.

In the light of post-fire recovery plans for Mount Canobolas SCA, it was somewhat reassuring to see the renewing vegetation of the Warrumbungles five years down the track. Well worth a visit.



Warrumbungle National Park, 5 years post fire. Note the thick regrowth and that feral goats are still there.

Notes from Rosemary and Doug.

We attended the second day of the symposium as most of these presentations

related to monitoring of flora and fauna rather than geology. Key messages for us were:

- Despite such a devastating fire and flash flood event things do recover.
- Fuel loads peak 6-12 years post fire and then stabilise. So should any hazard reduction occur at all?
- Lessons from this monitoring will help in post fire monitoring and management of Mt Canobolas.
- Over 400 nest boxes were erected as there was concern that many tree hollows had been destroyed. Monitoring of them showed they were unsuitable for birds because of the high temperatures inside them in spring and summer. They had been used in a limited way by gliders
- Dick's presentation on Mt Canobolas created lots of interest.
- There is interest in including Mt Canobolas in future research work across other volcanic areas in NSW, such as the Warrumbungles, Mt Kaputar and the New England.



Turquoise Parrot spotted beside the road in Warrumbungle National Park

Dick has offered to collate information from the conference and give a talk on it at OFNCS early next year.

Colour returns to Mt Canobolas

Observations from Rosemary Stapleton

If you look closely on a drive up the mountain you will see that it has started to show more life and colour. Whilst many areas are still showing the devastation of the fire a greener tinge is appearing and there is the occasional pinpoint of colour. Purple and mauve spots along the roadsides are sprouting *Hardenbergia violacea* and small clusters of *Viola betonicifolia* (photo below). Spots of white on some of the slopes are Early Nancy

flowers, *Wurmbea dioica*, and there is the occasional flash of yellow from Yam Daisies.



More of the Eucalypts are sprouting and many of the earlier epicormic shoots on the trunks and branches look like furry woolly sleeves. At the top of Mitchell Way the shrubs to the south west have lots of interesting new shoots surrounding the base of the trunks (photo below).



The other colour on the long weekend was provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Steve Woodhall (photo below) and Stuart Vial held a display with help from Greg Pearce and Claire Davis. There was information on the park and its heritage as well as the fire and the recovery process. Over the three days they had conversations with the steady stream of locals and visitors who made their way to the top of the mountain.



On Monday WIN News filmed a story on the recovery of the SCA. OFNCS Committee members Dick and Cilla joined the rangers and ECCO President Nick King for the interviews. Steve was also interviewed by ABC radio.

Every time I visit I see different birds and this time it was White-eared Honeyeaters in the burnt shrubs at Mitchell Way. At Towac Creek there were Grey Fantails hawking over the water and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo calling. Such things always remind me how valuable such a natural area is.

Creature of the Month

Hooded Robin - *Melanodryas cucullate*

From Cilla Kinross



Last week-end I was checking fences and spraying serrated tussock in a wooded area on the far side of our property near Third Crossing, Summer Hill Creek, when I saw a pair of really unusual birds. The male was a little smaller than a starling with a dramatic black head, white chest and black back with white bands. The female was a quiet grey with white wing bars.

It threw me at first, and then I realised that they were probably hooded robins. I was confused because they were so big, but then I remembered that Hooded Robins are much larger than their red-breasted cousins and I was able to confirm their identity when I got home.

Hooded Robins are listed as 'vulnerable' under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, and are recognised as a species in need of conservation action via the Save Our Species Program as their habitat is gradually being lost across their range. They generally prefer lightly timbered areas, and are often associated with fallen logs and small clearings. Much of their preferred habitat is still being cleared for agriculture, despite their listing as a threatened species.

You will often see them perched on a dead stump or fence post, ready to pounce on their insect prey. They are usually seen alone, in pairs or in small groups, and are usually quiet, but I heard them calling, a type of soft 'whee-whee-whew-whew' and they are known to sing loudly under moonlight.

I am hoping that this pair will stay and breed. I went back the day after to get this photograph and they were in the same spot, near our creek, which is good sign. Usually they nest in pairs, but are occasionally know to nest cooperatively (where others, often older offspring, will help feed the chicks). They like to use fine bark in their nest, often attached with spider web, so I shall look out for naked stringybark trees and angry spiders!

When the chicks hatch, it is the male that does most of the feeding, but they only take 12 days to fledge (learn to fly) and then they will be off. As this is a very quiet area of the property where I've seen Brown Treecreepers and Diamond Firetails nesting (both also threatened), I'll definitely be keeping an eye on the proceedings over the spring.

Coming Events

Spring Creek Reservoir Quarterly Bird Surveys. Saturday 6th October with Cilla. Meet at the gates to the reservoir at 9am. Bring water and some sustenance as the walk takes 2 hours. Cilla is willing the 8 Freckled Ducks seen on Wednesday to stay around until Saturday.

Streamwatch will be held on Wednesday 17th October at Fourth Crossing from 3 to 5pm. Come along and learn how to survey a water body for macroinvertebrates. Bring your gumboots, a bucket and net if you have one. Enquiries contact Jane Paul 6362 3950

Member News

OFNCS website - the new website looks great. Visit <https://www.orangefieldnats.com/>
OFNCS Museum Display – the display at the museum finishes on Sunday so if you haven't visited take a look on the weekend.

Peregrine chicks – Cilla welcomed the hatching of 2 of the 3 eggs in the CSU water tower. To see the chicks being fed by the parents visit the live YouTube images at <http://www.csu.edu.au/special/falconcam/Streams/camera-one.htm>

Frogs - heard at small dam at RFS complex – Eastern Sign-bearing Froglet (*Crinia parinsignifera*), Spotted Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*) and of course Common Eastern Froglet (*Crinia signifera*). The Australian Museum's FrogID app makes identification easy.

Common Greenshank – reported on Erema Birdline as being on the eastern side of Lake

Canobolas by Geraldine and Colina Huxtable and Doug Calder on 30th September.

Superb Parrots have been back in town for a few weeks as at Gosling Creek Reserve. A pair was also checking out the hollows in the eucalypt at the southern end of Ploughmans Wetland.

Joyce Lawson - long-time member Joyce is moving to Sydney. Joyce said to me a few months ago that she had many happy memories of the Society. Excursions were highlights for her as she enjoyed going into the bush and visiting so many interesting places.



Here Joyce and the late Herb May enjoy a morning tea cuppa on an excursion to Wambool Nature Reserve in October 2008. They had a much better view of the flowering orchids than the 'younger' members who all sat in their folding chairs.

OFNCS History

As part of the museum display we looked at the activities the Society had done since it began in 1974. Luckily Jenny Medd had done a meticulous job archiving documents and had prepared a list of the topics and speakers of talks as well as details of the excursions. Peter Toedter collated all the information on the talks and I summarised the list of excursions and activities. It was really surprising to see what an amazing history the Society has.

Meeting Topics

Meetings are held once a month and there is an excursion on the following Sunday, usually relating to the evening talk. Speakers can be members of the society, or staff from government or educational institutions, or someone from the community with a particular interest. Members help to find appropriate speakers from their networks.

Presentations, usually accompanied by some really great photos, related broadly to natural history. The presentations are informal and have opportunities for interaction and questions. Topics have included the following:

- plants and plant communities, ranging from trees to orchids and fungi;
- animals and their habitats, including birds, mammals, insects; reptiles, amphibians and fish;
- geology, including mine sites and their rehabilitation, and caving;
- the natural history of areas visited by members, often overseas; and
- environmental issues e.g. the conservation of natural areas, inappropriate development or contentious legislative changes

Excursions and Gatherings

Excursions have been to around 105 locations; some only once and others many times. Sometimes they have been cancelled due to snow, rain, extreme weather or fire.

As you can see from the list the excursions have been to local and quite distant places; on private property as well as public land. Some of the activities have been:

- biodiversity surveys and bird counts with other organisations
- regular OFNCS organised surveys, some of which were intensive and held over several days or weeks
- bird banding and spotlighting
- working bees that included restoration work, clean ups, planting and weed removal
- workshops and information days and
- hosting other conservation groups on their visits to the Orange area.

On the social side there have been occasional dinners and the regular Christmas gatherings have been barbeques, picnics or dinners.

Excursion Locations

Abercrombie Caves
Aboriginal sites, Mt Canobolas, Borenore & Yuranigh, led by Bill Allen
Back Yamma S.F.
Barton Nature Reserve
Fossil & Mineral Gallery, Bathurst
Blue Mountains - Grand Canyon, Blue Gum Forest, Kanangra Walls, Ruined Castle at Katoomba, Lawson (Fredericka and Dante Falls)
Borenore Caves later Karst Reserve
Bosche's Creek, Mullion Range/Flora Reserve
Breelong N.P.
Bridle Track / Hill End
Brown's Creek (Blayney) & Junction Reefs mines
Bumberry S.F.

Bumberry/Currembenya Ranges
Burnt Yards - Canobolas Regional Parklands
Burrendong Arboretum and property 'Yattagul'
Cadia
Caleula Creek and Marble Quarry
Caleula Range & Trig
Canomodine Creek/Colombine Range
Canowindra fish fossils & Age of Fishes Museum
Capertee Valley
Carcoar Native Grass Trial site
Central Mines Trail, Ophir Road
Central Mullion Ranges/Reserve
Chambers Creek - Mystery tour
Cheeseman's Creek, 'Mirrabooka', Cheeseman's Creek - Geology/Fossil trip
Cliefden Caves
Clifton Grove, Brumby's Run
Cobborah S.F. Biodiversity survey
Conimbla N.P. Cowra
Copperhannia Nature Reserve
Cowra 'Fernhill' NCT property
Cudal, 'Marylebone'
Cumnock - 'Old Yullundry', Wildlife Refuge
Curmbenya Nature Reserve
Dubbo Western Plains Zoo
Dunns Swamp, Wollemi N.P.
Eugowra - Escort Rock & 'Lynwood'
Eugowra Nature Reserve
Evans Crown Nature Reserve
Four Mile Creek Picnic area, Pine Rocks & Mt Canobolas forestry inspection
Fourth Crossing - Streamwatch and excursions
Freemantle
Gardens of Stone
Gilgandra Flora Reserve & Yallaroo Eucalypt Farm
Girralang Nature Reserve
Goobang N.P.
Goonoo S.F. - Glossy Black Cockatoo survey
Goulburn River N.P. camping
Gum Swamp Reserve, Forbes
Gumble, 'Bellevue'
Heifer Station Creek TSR
Hervey Ranges
Hill End
Iflord Cemetery
Kalinga, adjacent to Borenore Caves Reserve
Kandos Weir/Dunn's Swamp and Olinda

Kiacatoo N.P.
Killonbutta (part of the Southwest Woodlands Nature Reserve)
Borenore - Koolewong Arboretum
Koorawatha Reserves
Lake Canobolas & Earth Sanctuary
Lake Endeavour/ Parkes water supply dam
Lapstone Hill
Larras Lee - 'Larrapinta' & The Gap
Lewis Ponds - gorge and private property
Long Point, Macquarie River
Lysterfield Reserve, South Orange
Macquarie Marshes with Dubbo FNCS
Macquarie River, Dickson's Long Point
Macquarie Woods
Manildra Creek Reserve
Mingham Spring, Mandagery S.F.
Molong - Wild's property
Molong Dam
Mt Bulga & Mt Bulga Reserve (Eastern section)
Mt Canobolas - Devil's Hole, Walls Picnic area & Nature Track, Federal Falls
Mt Canobolas and Mt Towac
Mt Canobolas, Wongabbie Wilderness walk
Mt Tomah walks
Mullion Creek - Marble Quarry, north of Mullion Creek
Mullion Creek SCA / Central Mines Track
Mullion Creek, Marble Quarry & remnant native woodland on private property
Mullion Range & State Forest, various parts
Nanami Lane Drive
Nangar N.P.
Newnes Valley & Plateau Glow-worm tunnel
North Mullion Range / Oakey Creek walk
Ophir Reserve – various including flora & fauna survey/study & spotlighting
Orange - Common myna survey with ECCO
Orange Agric. Research Centre, Collections Unit & Veterinary Centre Building
Orange area - remnant vegetation around area, Botanic Gardens, Agric. College, Cook Park, Bloomfield Park, Gosling Creek & Hinton Reserves, Dairy Creek Road and constructed wetlands, ELF Community Garden and wineries
Paling Yards Reserve & Creek
Red Hand Caves, Lidsdale / Newnes

Rocks Hill reserve
Shadforth Reserve
South Mullion Range/Reserve, El Dorado
South Mullion-Lewis Ponds area - Old Coach Road walk
Spring Creek Reservoir
Spring Forest sites, Cowra Woodland birds
Third Crossing, Summer Hill Creek
Tomingley, 'Mottlecah'
Two Mile Creek
Upper Molong Creek, Cargo Rd
Valley of the Waters
Wallaby, Errowanbang
Walli - The Piano Cave
Wambool Common /Nature Reserve
Weddin Mountains N.P.
Wellington, Mt Arthur Reserve and fossil site
White Rocks
Wilbertroy Reserve
Winburndale Nature Reserve
Wombeyan Caves
Yeoval Banjo Paterson woodland



Surprise photo just received – Dick enjoying a visit to Siding Spring Observatory

NOTICES

1. Subscriptions.

Payment of Annual Subscriptions is due following the Annual General Meeting in February. 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.

Subscription rates:

Single member – \$25

Each additional family member – \$5

Concession rate (emailed newsletters) – \$12.50

Concession rate (printed newsletters) – \$25

Note: concession rate is for *bona fide* pensioners and students only.

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