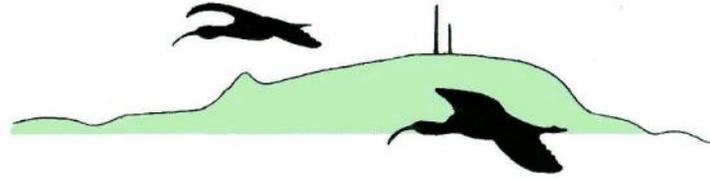


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2021

AGM & NEXT MEETING

Thursday 11th February, 7.30 pm.

**Nguluway Ngurang Senior Citizens Centre
North Room**

(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

The AGM will be followed by a 'Show and Tell' of member's photographs. Social distancing & other Covid rules will apply.

Please come along, have a say, and bring some photos to show everyone. The photos are sure to be interesting.

Committee Meeting at 6.30 pm.

NEXT EXCURSION

Sunday 14th February, 7.00 - 9.30 pm.

Note the later time.

**Picnic and spotlighting at Federal Falls
Picnic Area, Mt Canobolas SCA.**

Leader – Nigel Hobden

A jumper might be a good idea if the weather is cool. If the weather is stormy the excursion will not go ahead.



**Welcome to 2021 – the Central Tablelands
LLS Year of the Dung Beetle.**

Covid Requirements for all Meetings

Check-in is now required at the Senior Citizens Centre. There are 2 options:

- a QR code via the Service NSW App.
- sign in with full name, phone number or email address and time of entry and exit.

The Council has informed us that if NSW Health identifies that a positive case of Covid-19 has attended the centre, Council is required to provide the relevant attendance records within 4 hours! Your co-operation would be appreciated.

Excursion Details – 14th February 7.30 pm

Come and share the love for nature on Valentine's Day by spying on the special night creatures on Mt Canobolas, such as this Greater Glider that Nigel spotted.

BYO everything – food, drink, utensils, chairs and torches or headlamps. Spotlights and call playback equipment will be available.

December Meeting & Christmas Gathering

The Committee met in December to plan our program of talks and excursions for 2021. There are some fascinating speakers lined up and excursions to familiar and new places.

Talks range from an update on the NPWS developments on Mt Canobolas in March, to snakes, Peregrines and even Kew Gardens, Columbia, and Madagascar later in the year. Other than a few excursions to Mt Canobolas we're planning excursions to Winburndale Nature Reserve, Back Yamma State Forest, and Kanangra Boyd National Park.

Members of ECCO and OFNCS relaxed, shared stories and Christmas cheer at the ELF on the 13th December. The surprise of the evening was a visit by long-time member Paul Meeth. Paul introduced Joanne, his wife of 6 weeks. OFNCS wish them a happy future together spending part of the year in Orange and the cooler months in Casino.

Committee News - little has happened since December. Unfortunately, Peter Toedter has had to step down from the OFNCS Committee so please think about nominating for the committee (and other positions) at the AGM.

Several OFNCS members are involved in the Inland Rivers Campaign to prevent the raising of the Wyangala Dam wall. The Upper House Inquiry has revealed greatly increased cost estimates, engineering problems, and has highlighted environmental and cultural heritage issues.

Spring Creek Reservoir Quarterly Survey

Report Rosemary Stapleton.

The summer survey occurred on the 8th January. I thought the weather forecast of sun would mean a pleasant day, but the wind was gusty and cool. Once again there were no muddy edges or obvious roosting sites for the water birds as the water level was still very high due to the recent rain and storms. There weren't a lot of birds on the water, especially at the southern end, because the Kinross School rowers were there.

We spotted chicks or juveniles of 4 species. There were Red Wattlebird juveniles and a juvenile Dusky Woodswallow being fed. It was good to see this threatened species breeding at the reservoir.



Dusky Woodswallow chick. Photo R Stapleton.

A Great Crested Grebe pair had 2 small chicks. When they saw us, the chicks climbed onto the back of an adult to hide under their wings. There were also several sets of Coot young – not the orange spikey new chicks but older juveniles that had yet to get their black feathers.

The wind didn't prevent the other birds being seen. Highlights again being 3 Sacred Kingfishers, a group of 6 Double-barred Finches and a Rufous Whistler singing its beautiful song. While not seen Golden-headed Cisticolas and Little Grassbirds were heard.

As we finished the survey it was wonderful to watch a pair of Darters circling above and some Little Pied Cormorants soaring up on thermals to disappear....and a Nankeen Kestrel flew by.

Forty species were seen as well as some unidentified Martins in the distance.



One of the 3 Sacred Kingfishers.

Photo Cilla Kinross.

The value of our Reservoirs for Birds

Leanne Huxley writes....

'Serendipitous moments are something that keen birders are all too familiar with and why we are rarely far from our binoculars.

This Summer has produced some great regular and reliable sightings of Latham's Snipe. Mid December, at the southern end of Lake Canobolas, the mudflats were an ideal location. I flushed 2, then another 4 and then discovered another 2 feeding amongst the reeds. Rain leading up to Christmas raised the water level and reduced the available foraging area. Only 2 Snipe on Christmas Day. Other good birds at this location included Little Grassbird, Nankeen Night Heron, Blue-billed Duck and White-necked Heron.

Around Christmas and into mid-January, at the area north-west of the Spring Creek Reservoir along Lone Pine Avenue there were also interesting birds. Five visits produced Latham's Snipe each time and as many as 4 birds were seen foraging on the mud flats. Other good birds at this location included Royal Spoonbill, Australasian Shovelers, Nankeen Night Heron, Blue-billed Duck, Little Grassbird, White-winged Triller, Double-barred Finch and 2 Budgerigars.

Why wouldn't you keep your binoculars close at hand?"

Leanne also commented that 'in January there were lots of baby everything about including the

Crested Grebe, Pink-eared and Musk Ducks (super cute)'. Nigel managed these photos and I agree the ducklings are cute and skilled!



Mt. Canobolas SCA Update

OFNCS welcomes Jack Fry, the new NPWS Ranger who covers many of the local parks and reserves, including Mt Canobolas SCA.

With the winter and spring rain the vegetation on the mountain has jumped out of the ground. And I'm sure visitor numbers have also jumped significantly as there are often campers at Federal Falls Picnic Area and walkers on the tracks.

It has been quiet on the orchid front with only a few spikes of the bright pink Hyacinth orchid being seen. Col encouraged some of us to look for the Elbow Orchid, a species that was seen in the SCA a long time ago and needs to be confirmed for the mountain. It hasn't been spotted yet this season.



Dipodium roseum from Mt Canobolas SCA. Note the curled back petals and sepals. Photo Nigel Hobden.

In early January members of the Canobolas Conservation Alliance (CCA) Committee met to plan a campaign to protect the SCA from the bike track development. Details of how you can help will be circulated soon.

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 7 February, 10am – 1pm. A picnic to celebrate World Wetlands Day will be held at Ploughmans Wetland. It will be hosted by ECCO and the Ploughmans Valley Care Group. World Wetlands Day is actually on the 2nd February and marks the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on Wetlands at Ramsar in Iran.

2021 Cowra Woodland Bird Surveys dates, COVID permitting. If you are interested contact Malcolm Fyfe on (02)4471-8757, malcolmfyfe85@gmail.com 13-14 February, 17-18 April, 17-18 July, 16-17 October.

Wild Pollinator Count - 11-18 April 2021.

<https://wildpollinatorcount.com/count-pollinators/>

Take 10 minutes to watch flowers in your garden or local park and take note of what you see! Look at a flower or group of flowers, not necessarily the whole plant. Then enter what you've seen into [their database](#). Give the name of the plant and even submit photos so the experts can help identify the insects. Outside these dates use iNaturalist to submit records.

22 & 23 June - Orchid Conservation

Symposium. The Australian Network for Plant Conservation Inc., in collaboration with La Trobe University and project partners is holding an orchid conservation symposium in 2021. This symposium to be held over two days will provide an online forum to increase awareness of the ecology and conservation of orchids amongst practitioners. It will also provide an opportunity to share the project's results and promote networking among the orchid conservation community. To receive updates on the Orchid Symposium please [subscribe to the mailing list](#). For more information on the project please [head to their website](#).

Sightings around Orange

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

Plants

Dipodium punctatum – several plants were flowering along the track in Black Sally Reserve. This species is more heavily spotted than *D. roseum* and has straight petals and sepals.



Photo Nigel Hobden.

Tall Lobelia, *Lobelia gibbose*. Seen and photographed by Hai near the Fall's Lookout on Ophir Road. Identified by Dick who commented '*it seems to be a good year for them – lots growing in the northern Mullions woodlands before Xmas as well this year – generally not that common*'.



***Casuarina* sp.** Rosemary noticed a regrowing plant that looked like a Casuarina when walking to the NE of the Federal Falls Track. Both Col, Dick and Steve suggest it is a 'ring in' (not naturally occurring) as Casuarinas usually don't

grow above 700m and this was at over 1200m! Did it come in via Towac Road or was it brought in by a Cockatoo?

Lots of 'Things with Wings'

Peregrine Chick Izzi. Cilla reports it's one of those bumper seasons when a peregrine's mind turns to six legged, rather than two-legged prey. The youngster is particularly fond of them, demolishing 18 in one day (18/12). Most seem to be black princes or greengrocer cicadas, but others are mostly orange (masked devils?) or black with orange under-abdomens. Then in mid-January Xavier brought in a bright blue Budgerigar one day. That WAS as surprise!

Diamond Firetails spotted on 23/1/2021 on Kinross Forest Rd by Bernie Huxtable.

Farm Dam near Millthorpe - Brain Williams reports one of their dams is doing a wonderful job being a breeding ground for Grebes, Masked Lapwings, and a few different duck species.

Speckled Warbler – an uncommon species spotted by Cilla on her property on Ophir Road and a large flock of Little Ravens.

Mullion Range State Conservation Area. Leanne was again busy in this reserve seeing Olive-backed Oriole, Sacred Kingfisher, Rufous Whistler and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters feeding chicks or fledglings. Also seen were Varied Sitella (twice), a Brush Cuckoo, Spotted Quail Thrush (3) and plenty of Spotted and Striated Pardalotes. While Leanne said honeyeaters are still in short supply, they did see Yellow-faced, Brown-headed, White-naped, White-eared, Red Wattlebird and Noisy Friar. Small bush birds were also in short supply, but they did pick up Buff-rumped and Striated Thornbills. Leanne also noted plant life through this area is looking fabulous at the moment.

Budgerigar – 1 reported several times at Gosling Creek Reserve, via eBird, by Abbey Dean and Steve Gross. Steve also reported a **Plum-headed Finch**.

Common Myna – sadly, these birds are still in Orange. They breed from October to March with 4-5 glossy, pale blue eggs. A bird was seen entering a cavity in a mature eucalypt on the walking track off Hill Street south of the Botanic Gardens. Nigel Hobden was notified and found these eggs in the nest but was

unable to capture the adult bird. A few weeks later a bird was seen entering the nest again.



This shows how quickly the population of Common Myna will grow if several clutches are raised each year. Please report any breeding activity of Mynas to Orange City Council.

Other Wildlife

Brown Snake – Nigel came across the snake in on his way through the dense regrowth near the old Hopetoun Trail.

Marbled Gecko (*Christinus marmoratus*) photographed by Nigel on a window at his place in Orange. He commented '*they are hiding and hunting in an Escollonia shrub - I suspect the flowers are attracting night-time insects that they are feeding upon. Stoked to know these are about in the urban landscape. Generally, they are found in dry forests and woodlands, an arboreal species sheltering beneath loose bark or in rock crevices*'.



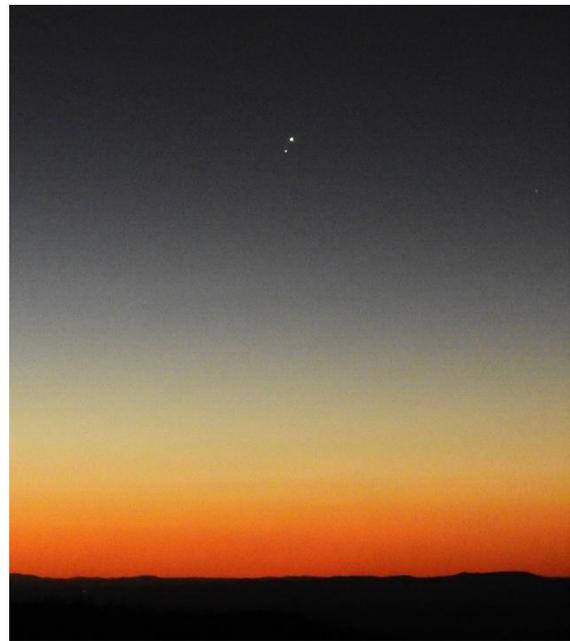
The Great Conjunction

Report and photo R Stapleton.

In early December [ABC Science](#) said 'this will be a rare treat as Jupiter and Saturn come so close to each other they will almost look like a single shining planet in the sky'. This conjunction happens every 20 years however 'this is the closest they will have appeared in the sky to each other in nearly 400 years. The last time it occurred was in 1623.... And the two planets won't appear this close to each other again until 2080.'

Did you grab this once in a lifetime chance, an hour after sunset, to view this astronomical

event? It was hard as there were so few cloudless nights just before Christmas. Some OFNCS members watched from Borenore Caves or Nashdale. We watched from Mitchells Way on Mt Canobolas and then our front steps in town. My birding telescope was helpful as we were able to see four moons of Jupiter as well as the rings of Saturn. Not only were the planets amazing it was beautiful to be outside at that time of night enjoying the sunset and sharing the stars.



Creature of the Month - Actinotus forsythia, Pink Flannel Flower.

Ruth Workman, a birding friend, photographed these flowers when driving through the Blue Mountains in early January. They are so delicate I thought they were a fitting subject for Creature of the Month.



The Australian Native Plant Society gives the following details for *Actinotus forsythia*.

‘Although of fairly widespread distribution, pink flannel flower is rarely seen in the wild as it does not appear every year. Apparently, it requires specific climatic conditions for seed stored in the soil to germinate. It is reported that it flowers for one season a year after a fire if there has been rain. It is found in scattered populations in damp areas in open forest and heath from the Blue Mountains west of Sydney to north-east Victoria.



Actinotus is a small genus of about 20 species most of which occur in Australia but there are 2 or 3 species native to New Zealand.

Like its more common relative, *Actinotus helianthi*, *A. forsythia* is a herbaceous, wiry plant with deeply lobed leaves which are grey and velvety in nature. The plant and flower heads are considerably smaller

than *A. helianthi* but larger than *A. minor*, the 'lesser flannel flower'. The overall appearance of each head of flowers is similar to a daisy which is really a cluster of little flowers, with separate male and female flowers surrounded by velvety, "petal-like" bracts. In the pink flannel flower, the central flowers are a deepish pink and the 'petals' are a very pale pink. Flowering, when it occurs, is usually in summer or occasionally in spring. Flowering is followed by fluffy seeds in a globular head. The seeds are dispersed by breezes.



A. forsythia is not considered to be at risk in the wild at the species level although it is listed as a high risk/vulnerable plant in the alpine area of Victoria.

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EFT payments to BSB 802 129: Account 100014678:

O F N & Cons Soc Inc.

Please be sure to identify payments with your name and send confirmation to orangefieldnats@gmail.com

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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 acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, including the people of the Wiradjuri Nation, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society, PO Box 369, Orange, 2800

orangefieldnats@gmail.com

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