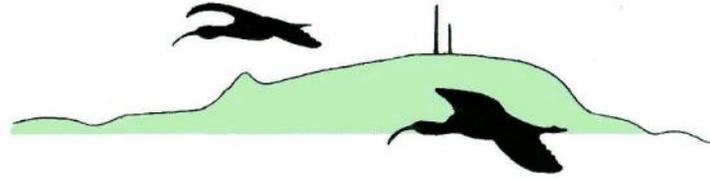


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER MAY 2021

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 13th May, 7.30 pm.
Nguluway Ngurang Senior Citizens Centre
North Room

(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

A Year at Kew Gardens
Speaker – Isobel Colson

NEXT EXCURSION

Sunday 16th May

Fungi Survey in Mt Canobolas SCA
An activity organised by Liz Davis from
Central Tablelands LLS

Details below

Next Meeting – 13th May, 7.30 pm.

A Year at Kew Gardens.

Speaker – Isobel Colson.

After growing up in the local area Isobel studied Environmental Science at Albury CSU. After working in western NSW, she moved to the UK to study for a Masters of Plant and Fungal Taxonomy, Diversity and Conservation at Kew Gardens. Isobel will share her experiences of studying at Kew Gardens between 2018 and 2019 as well as a trip to Madagascar to study tropical plants. If this isn't interesting enough Isobel will also talk about the project documenting macrofungi of Colombia in which she played a small part.

Isobel joined OFNCS in February last year after she returned to Orange where she works as an ecological consultant.

Check out this link to see what Kew is doing in Madagascar. <https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/make-madagascar-green-again>

Next Excursion – 16th May

Fungi Surveys in Mt Canobolas SCA – registration required with Central Tablelands LLS.

In recent newsletters I've notified members of a weekend focusing on fungi that is being organised by Liz Davis of Central Tablelands LLS. These events are in association with Alison Pouliot, the fungi photographer and author. On Saturday 15th there is a workshop 'Fungi in Focus- Photographing Fungi for Scientific Purposes' and on Sunday a field trip to Mt Canobolas SCA to photograph and identify fungi.

Registrations for both days are restricted and Liz has generously offered some spaces to OFNCS members. If you gave your name to me, you should have received a registration email from Liz. If you have not, but are interested, you could contact Liz on liz.davis@lls.nsw.gov.au 0427 452 662 to see if there are any places left for the activities. Liz will provide details on registration.



*Fungi from Mt Canobolas SCA.
Photo R Stapleton.*

Last Meeting: 8th April, 7.30 pm.

NPWS Plans for Mt Canobolas SCA

Speaker - Mr Steve Woodhall, A/Team Leader Ranger, Central West Area, NPWS.

Text by Rosemary Stapleton.

We knew we were in for an engaging talk from Steve when he said he would not only talk about the NPWS plans for Mt Canobolas SCA but also other interesting projects that were 'making his hair greyer'.

Steve presented the detailed plans for the \$2m capital upgrade of visitor facilities for Mount Canobolas SCA. They include redevelopment of the Summit, The Walls Picnic Area and lookout and Towac Picnic Area. The main track work will be on the Federal Falls Track, including a new bridge, with minor work on all other tracks.



The bridge on the Federal Falls Track that will be replaced. Photo NPWS.

It was pleasing to see that key aspects of the plans included disabled access, separation of vehicles and pedestrian traffic, better control of runoff to reduce erosion and upgraded facilities to cope with increased visitation. Careful consideration has also been given to reduce the impact of visitors on the environment, especially at The Walls.

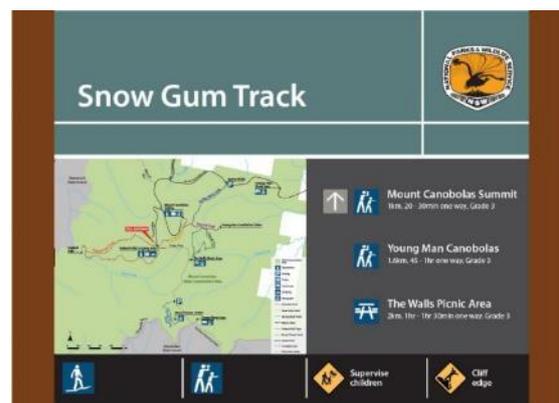
The value of the mountain for locals and tourism has been demonstrated during COVID with a doubling of visitor numbers to 150,000 per year. Federal Falls walking track is averaging 50 people a day.

The development at The Summit will remain within the existing footprint except for a 5 metre parking extension to the west. The bluestone facing on the existing walls will be repurposed and a lichen wall created. Lookout platforms will be built at The Summit and The Walls. There will also be a larger toilet block at The Summit and picnic tables at the two other sites. All 3 sites will have a small number of extra parking spaces. At Towac Picnic Area vehicle movement will be formalised.

Archaeological surveys have been done at all three sites. Some artefacts will be cached and

buried on site and a small number will likely be kept by Orange Local Aboriginal Land Council for educational purposes.

New directional and interpretative signage will also be installed.



An example of the new directional signage. Photo NPWS.

Tenders for The Summit development will be let soon so work can start in September and finish by late January. The summit will be closed at different times with a temporary gate just above the Towac Way intersection.

Steve also stated that extra funds had been received for weed control with 3 contractors engaged to work on roads and fire trails. NPWS staff will work on the walking tracks. It is hoped that similar funding will be received next financial year.

Post-fire recovery of *Prostanthera gilesii* is positive with plants clumping up. He is still waiting to hear the outcome of the Area of Outstanding Biodiversity Value nomination for the SCA. Steve also gave special thanks to Rosemary Stapleton and Andrew Rawson for the work they had done on Aboriginal heritage. This has led to a significant increase in the number and extent of known sites within the SCA that have been entered into the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System.

In relation to the Mountain Biking proposal Steve has been informed that the constraints mapping, and concept track design had been completed. The Environmental Factor and Dirt Art were ground marking the proposed tracks and an environmental assessment would follow.

Other Central West NPWS Projects

Steve talked about some of the work being done in the Central West NPWS Area. Did you know that this NPWS area covers over 20% of NSW?

Covid stimulus funds had been received to encourage economic activity to improve the visitor experience of parks. It is being used for:

- Weed control
- The walking track to the Cascades at Mullion Range SCA
- Asbestos removal – Quanda NR south west of Hermidale
- Safety fencing and an interpretative display – Nangar NP
- Car body & rubbish removal – Mullion Range SCA & Girralang NR.

Two new staff have been employed to plan and supervise a 10-year Fire Trail Upgrade Program. This involves improving the safety of firefighters by implementing state-wide standards for fire-trails.

Steve finished his presentation with details of the exciting Yathong NR Re-Wilding Project. This is a 40,000 ha feral animal free enclosure aiming to protect 28 threatened animal species. It also includes the re-introduction of 9 locally extinct animal species. This will begin in 3 years. This project is included in the Central Mallee Reserves Draft Plan of Management which is on exhibition until 5 July 2021. It incorporates Yathong Nature Reserve, Nombinnie Nature Reserve, Nombinnie State Conservation Area, and Round Hill Nature Reserve. If you wish to comment, go to <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/get-involved/have-your-say>

The biggest surprise of the night was Steve announcing that he will be retiring in July. Long-standing OFNCS members have known Steve for many years, and he was thanked for his dedication and significant contribution to our parks and reserves. On reflection, his talk started with a comment about his hair and finished with a quip from an audience member saying he had less than when he started in his ranger role!

Last Excursion: 11th April, 9.00am.
Mt Canobolas SCA with Steve Woodhall.

Text by Jenny Medd, photos by Helmut Berndt.

Following his talk at the meeting on Thursday 8th April, Steve Woodhall, along with ranger Jack Fry, led the visit to Mt Canobolas SCA to view and discuss the sites of proposed redevelopments within the reserve. Fortunately, the group of some ten keen participants had rugged up in anticipation of the chilly welcome that awaited them at the summit: 4 degrees was made even chillier by

the biting wind! Interestingly the weather hadn't deterred numerous visitors to the mountain either, including a surprising number of campers at Federal Falls campground.

Commencing at the Summit, Steve walked the group through the plan and pointed out specific features that had been addressed. One unexpected observation suggested that insufficient parking spaces had been included, especially given the increasing visitor numbers, giving cause for some debate.



Steve Woodhall explaining planned developments to the Summit. Photo H Berndt.

Moving on to the Walls area, most of the group headed down the steps to the Lookout with Steve. We agreed that the platform to be constructed there would be a significant improvement. Not only will it provide a much safer viewing area, along with information boards, but has been designed to maximise protection for the lichen populations. Jack meanwhile had spent the time talking with those who were unable to make it to the lookout area.



Rugged up at The Walls Lookout. Photo Helmut Berndt.

At the Towac picnic area, it was plain to see that intervention and redevelopment was desperately needed. And sad to see just how uncaring some visitors can be! When redeveloped this area should be a much more pleasant experience for everyone who visits and provide much better protection for the immediate landscape. Despite the unrelenting

cold, discussions continued covering NPWS funding, possibilities of dual naming, and ways in which the Aboriginal Elders in particular might pursue additional protections for the mountain. Jack was able to contribute a good deal of information from his previous experiences.

Many thanks go to both Steve and Jack for an informative morning and for the time they gave so generously.

Committee News

The Committee has agreed to support the Canobolas Conservation Alliance by developing brochures for the walking trails in Mt Canobolas SCA highlighting plants, birds, and other fauna. A \$100 donation was also made to the Belubula Headwaters Protection Group to assist with their fight against the proposed Regis Mine at Kings Plains.

Spring Creek Reservoir Quarterly Survey, 2nd April 2021.

Report by Rosemary Stapleton.

Timetables were reorganised at very short notice for the bird survey. It was a stunning autumn morning, with no wind and the air was warming up. The road was closed at the culvert at the western end due to wash from the recent heavy rain. Lots of water was flowing through from Gosling Creek and the reservoir was very full.

Although the waterbirds were spread out there were lots of the usual bush birds to see. Silveryeyes and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were in the willows and hawthorns eating the berries, the aphids or their sugary exudate that was on the willows. One Golden-headed Cisticola was spotted in their usual pose of doing 'the splits' between two grass stalks. A few Double-barred Finches were also feeding on the seed heads of grasses along the road. The only raptor was a Whistling Kite flying by with lazy wing beats.

Little Black Cormorants were roosting in small groups in dead willows but part way down they all converged and formed a v-formation possibly as a prelude to a fishing party. A total of eighty five were counted, with only two Great Cormorants and twenty two Little Pied Cormorants.



Fishing Little Black Cormorants at Spring Creek Reservoir. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

The fishing was also good for Australian Darters as the four that were roosting on the outlet infrastructure had very full crops. A total of eight Darters was perhaps double what is usually seen and there were also more Dusky Moorhens. However, the Grebes were missing and there were no Australian or Hoary-headed Grebes. Only one Great Crested Grebe was spotted through the scope at the far southern end of the dam. Perhaps the water was too deep for them or there were better dams elsewhere?

There was still evidence of breeding by ducks with one of the eleven Musk Ducks seen being a juvenile. It was still trying to climb onto its parent's back. A family of Pacific Black Ducks was also spotted with young ducklings. It was good to see a pair of Blue-billed Duck, a threatened species.



Musk Duck adult and juvenile at Spring Creek Reservoir. Photo Cilla Kinross.

A total of forty two species were seen during our two hour count walking down the road and an additional three species at the western end on the way out: a Pink-eared Duck, Grey Teal and Australian White Ibis.

Canobolas Conservation Alliance Update

Report by Jenny Medd.

Meetings were held by Zoom on March 29th and 19th April and most importantly at the ELF on April 10th for a second planning session chaired by Bev Smiles. At the latter meeting activities since the first planning meeting were reviewed, and earlier Power mapping and SWOT analysis

updated before identifying future critical pathways was undertaken.

Apart from ongoing matters regarding the AOBV nomination, media activities, engagement with the local Indigenous community and political lobbying, a number of additional ideas are being pursued, including:

- A picnic at John Williams Park to engage as many locals (groups and individuals) as possible.
- A public forum at which to present our case and allow questions from the public.
- A petition addressed to Orange City Council.
- Development of a series of “Fact sheets” for the SCA.

Additional membership of the Alliance continues to be a priority, particularly of people who may have time to share some of the workload and/or skills to assist with various activities. Please consider becoming involved!

Get to know the Glossy Black Cockatoo, 24th March, Parkes.

Report by Rosemary Stapleton.

Warren Chad, aka Chaddy, was the main speaker at this workshop organised by Marg Applebee, from Central West Lachlan Landcare. OFNCS members Murray Fletcher, Vicki Glover and I attended.

Libby McIntyre, from Central West Local Land Services, started the morning with an overview of the Save our Species Program for Inland Glossy Black Cockatoos. This has been funded for 7 years. Libby outlined that the first steps had been mapping and ground truthing suitable Glossy habitat in the key areas of the Pilliga, Goonoo and Goobang. This was habitat with *Allocasuarina* patches and trees with hollows for breeding. Other strategies of the program are to:

- Deploy cameras and song meters to detect Glossies
- Protect and enhance habitat on private properties by fencing and planting
- Conduct hazard reduction around habitat trees
- Instal nest boxes and do hollow augmentation
- Undertake more vegetation surveys
- Control weeds.

Chaddy is a keen birder from Condobolin and in recent years his passion has become bird photography. As a citizen scientist Chaddy has been monitoring Glossy Blacks from Rankins Springs through to Fifield and Tullamore. In these areas they often feed on the *Casuarina cristata*, known as Belah. For several years he focused on a population to the south west of Condobolin and identified several breeding sites. Through his excellent photos he showed us the different features of male, female and juvenile birds and handed around examples of the cones from different species of feed trees. A highlight for him was a photo (below) of the first flight of a fledged bird from one of the nests he had been watching.



Chaddy ended his talk by raising concerns about the impact of increased land clearing and destruction of habitat, particularly clearing of whole paddocks as well as wide strips along fence lines. He had seen how this removes food and breeding trees as well as reducing connectivity between feeding patches. His broader comments were about how the world had reached its ‘carrying capacity’, something anyone who has worked on the land can identify with.

A trip to a nearby dam had been planned but because of the rain Marg asked Chaddy to give short presentations on ‘An Introduction to Bird Watching’ and ‘Bird Photography’. We were given lots of practical tips and saw more of his wonderful photos. One tip Chaddy gave about getting good photos of waterbirds was to get down to water level. I’m not sure any of us will follow his lead by floating into a dam on an inflated tyre tube with a camera. It was inspiring to hear how Chaddy has built up relationships with farmers and other locals and made them more aware of birds and their role in the environment.

When asked to comment on the workshop Murray said: *‘I found it very interesting. I already knew a bit about the Glossies and have*

done a couple of the surveys at Goonoo with the Dubbo Field Nats. However, I didn't know much about their biology or their nesting habits. I also found it fascinating to hear about the techniques Chaddy has developed to find their nests and how individual each bird can be. The second session was something I know quite a lot about, particularly identification of birds using bird guides. As I haven't got a mobile phone, I don't use the apps, but Vicki and I did a training course with Birdlife Australia when they first developed their app, and we also use Vicki's phone for our Birds in Backyards surveys. The third section, about Chaddy's photography techniques was very informative for me. The idea of keeping the sun behind you is familiar to birders anyway because identification of birds when you are looking into the sun and can only see them silhouetted against the bright sky is always frustrating. However, I hadn't thought about the advantages this also gives you for lighting your photos. Also planning your backgrounds in advance so that they don't detract from your subject was also good advice. The morning tea was excellent too!



Warren Chad, Vicki Glover and Murray Fletcher with one of Chaddy's photos of a Glossy Black Cockatoo. Photo R Stapleton.

Dates for your Diary

2021 Cowra Woodland Bird Surveys dates, 17-18 July, 16-17 October.

If you are interested contact Malcolm Fyfe on (02)4471-8757, malcolmfyfe85@gmail.com

22 May – Nature Conservation Council Regional Conference on the South Coast. You will be able to join via Zoom. <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/the-fires-changed-everything-tickets-148709043753>

22/23 June - Orchid Conservation Symposium. The Australian Network for Plant Conservation Inc. is holding this orchid

conservation symposium. This online forum aims to increase awareness of the ecology and conservation of orchids and promote networking. To receive updates please [subscribe to the mailing list](#). For more information on the project please [head to their website](#).

Postponed – Listening to the Lachlan Conference, Forbes. This event was to be held on 15/16 June. It has been postponed to August. New dates will be included in future newsletters.

Snipe Surveys - September 18, November 20, January 15 (2022)

<https://lathamssnipeproject.wordpress.com/>

Sightings around Orange

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

Autumn Orchids seem to have been the highlights for April. Perhaps Col's talk encouraged a few of us to look for them.

Cargo Quarry. Cath and Rosemary went looking for Greenhoods where they had seen them in 2010. Col identified what we found on the road embankment with one species being *Diplodium reflexum*. He commented 'note the rather squat flowers, short height, broad base, and short galea (hood). The second species is *Diplodium truncatum*. This is an interesting record of a less common species. Its special character is the broad, brown wide, blunt apex of the petals.'



Diplodium truncatum. Photo R Stapleton.

Conimbla National Park

Nigel walked the Ironbark Track in early April and found pollinated or spent flowers of a

species of Midge Orchid. He also spotted spikes of the Tiny Greenhood, *Speculantha* or *Bunochilus parviflora*.

Several weeks later Tracee Burke and Ruth Workman, from Gooloogong, went searching across the fire trail at the start of the Wallaby Track. They struck gold finding 2 species of Tiny Greenhoods (*Bunochilus parviflora* and *B. rubescens*) and 3 species of Midge orchids (*Genoplesium* or *Corunastylis clivicola*, *C. sagittifera* and *C. systema*). *C. systema* is a highly localised species only found in the Kangaroooby Range and Weddin Mountains between 400-600m altitude.



Corunastylis systema. Photo Ruth Workman.

These were all found again a week later as well as *Diplodium ampliatus*, the Autumn Greenhood, (previously *Pterostylis revoluta*). It seems that this flowering may have been stimulated by the storms in early April.



Bunochilus parviflora. Photo R Stapleton.

Nangar National Park

After seeing a meteor light up the night sky in Orange on Saturday 18th April Nigel threw his

swag and camera into the ute and drove out to Nangar NP. Unfortunately, nothing eventuated in the sky. Next day his walk up Mt Murga was more successful with lots of orchids spotted.

As in Conimbla *Speculantha parviflora* was out. He spotted 3 species of the larger autumn greenhoods. Col identified them as *Diplodium ampliatus* which tend to have tall, rather slender flowers with very long outstretched hoods. Also, *Diplodium reflexum*, the Dainty Greenhood, which have shorter broader (dumplier) flowers and *Diplodium laxum*.



Diplodium laxum. Photo Nigel Hobden.

During his talk in March Col commented that Nangar NP is really good for autumn orchids. He suggests 'it may be worth looking for *Diplodium truncatum*, which is rare, usually in lower areas often where it is damp or wettish. You may find *D. laxum*, which grows sparingly along Mogong Creek and tributaries on the footslopes above the creek. In similar places there may be *D. striatum* which has small dainty flowers in May, and it may also be found in Conimbla.'

'Things with Wings'

Double-barred Finches – a group have been at Cilla's for a while and can be seen mixed in with the yellow-rumps (Thornbills). Cilla commented 'I have a bejewelled lawn!'

Olive-backed Oriole – seen near the Lachlan River east of Cowra and at Gooloogong.

Malleefowl - from further afield. Murray and Vicki have been exploring south eastern South Australia and sent through this great birding report – "One of the places we wanted to find was Mt Scott Conservation Park, near Kingston, which reportedly has Malleefowl. We weren't expecting to find any but, when we arrived at the sign to the park, I saw one ahead on the road just disappearing into the roadside vegetation. I pointed it out to Vicki and she said "There's another one" in the open area just

behind the sign. Then the one I had seen emerged from the vegetation, strolled casually across the road and joined the second one behind the sign and they both headed into the vegetation in the park. We drove into the park about 100m to the information board...and there was another one! Eventually we had two just in front of the car scratching at the ground looking for morsels. Vicki was no more than 10m from them both and they weren't concerned - it was as if they knew her.'



Malleefowl. Photo Vicki Glover.

Insects

Platybrachys Nymphs - In early March I spotted some strange insects at Orange View in the SCA. They were behaving in a similar way to the planthopper *Platybrachys lurida* that was Creature of the Month in December 2019. Murray confirmed that they were the nymphs of a *Platybrachys* species.



Platybrachys nymph. Photo R Stapleton.

These tiny insects were very busy going up, down and sideways on the trunks of eucalypt trees. They were very well camouflaged, and it was hard to tell which end was which, especially with the strange appendages. Murray

notes 'the appendages are actually uric acid crystals. Instead of excreting liquid, they excrete uric acid as crystals from two pores on their abdomen and build up the column during each nymphal instar. When they shed their skin, they lose the uric acid from their previous instar and start again.'



An adult *Platybrachys lurida*.
Photo C Stapleton.

Creature of the Month

Spotted Quail-Thrush, *Cinlosoma punctatum*. Photo Cilla Kinross.



This beautiful male bird was spotted by Cilla when she was sitting quietly on a log at Fourth Crossing after doing a bird survey of the path up to the waterfall. It landed a few metres from her feet and she thinks there were two of them. It is a worthy CoM as Cilla said this species is very uncommon here and very difficult to observe. She also said, 'I was very lucky to see it and lucky to have my camera with me.'

The Pizzey and Knight Field Guide to the Birds of Australia and The Australian Bird Guide provide the following information.

This is the only species of Quail-thrush that lives in south-eastern Australia. Its range extends from Rockhampton to eastern Tasmania and inland from the Carnarvon Range to Grenfell and the Grampians. It may be locally

