

**NEXT MEETING**

**Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> September, 7.30pm**

**SPEAKER: Prof. David Goldney**

**TOPIC: Historical Changes in the  
Landscape of the Central West**

No Committee Meeting

**Senior Citizens and Pensioners Centre  
(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)**

All welcome

**EXCURSION**

**Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> September  
Changed Landscapes between Orange  
and Bathurst**

Meet 9am Orange Bus Bay to organise  
car pooling  
**See details below**

**Next Meeting: Historical Changes in the  
Landscape of the Central West.**

**Speaker:** Professor David Goldney.

David's talk will be on the fascinating history of the land use of the Central West Region from pre-European times to now. This topic is the subject of a chapter in the new publication "Biodiversity Dreaming: Sustaining Nature and Agriculture after 200 Years of European Inland Settlement in the Central West Region".

David is a well-known wildlife-landscape ecologist and academic with a particular interest in the ecology and wildlife of the Central Western Region of NSW. Over the past 47 years, he has spoken to hundreds of farmers and community groups about conserving biodiversity in agricultural landscapes.

**Next Excursion: Changed Landscapes  
between Orange and Bathurst.**

David will lead the excursion to places mentioned in his talk. There will be roadside stops or short off-track walks to look at habitat

changes. We will travel an ecological transect from the edge of the basalt country near Orange through the dominant Bathurst granite landscape to Bathurst. We will be reading the landscape, pass through a range of vegetation types, terminal treescapes, geologies and soil types, come up close with threatened species, remnant woodland, tree species that are physiologically exhausted, land degradation, rain shadows, a vast inland delta, historical landscape paintings and more.

**Last Speakers: Namibia to Victoria Falls –  
an amazing journey.** Talk, report & photos by Rosemary and Doug Stapleton.

Through a selection of our 7,426 photos and videos we shared the wonder of our February 2018 trip to Namibia. We had done self-driving holidays before in South Africa but as I was keen to see desert birds, we decided it was safer to go on an organised birding trip. We travelled through many different landscapes, stayed in some wonderful accommodation in unique places and enjoyed the company of our fellow travellers. The tour group sighted 415 bird and 46 mammal species.



*Secretarybird, a raptor, in Etosha National Park*

Our trip was a 19-day [Lawson's Birding Safari](#) and we spent 15 days in Namibia, 2 in Botswana on the Okavango Panhandle and ended with 2 days at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. The itinerary offered flexibility allowing Doug to take breaks from birding as well as enjoying the many other animals we saw. Even though it was summer it was the best time to visit as lots of

migrant bird species were visiting from the northern hemisphere.

The trip was shared with eight others in two minibuses; two English couples, an American couple and two South African guides. The guides had extensive knowledge of both birds and mammals and their skills helped achieve many of the exciting sightings of the trip. This included 30 minutes close up and personal with a Cheetah (below) walking and surveying its territory in Etosha National Park.



Namibia is a sparsely populated country with 20% of it being national parks or reserves. It ranges from desert in the west, on the Atlantic coast, through savanna woodland to subtropical grazing land and teak forests in the north east along the Caprivi Strip. Our route also went to the huge Etosha Pan and onto the two big rivers that are the borders with Angola and Zambia: the Okavango and the Zambezi.

The nation is very culturally diverse with eight main tribal groups. In the colonial era it was governed by Germany as South West Africa and after WW1 by South Africa. Independence struggles started in the late 1950's and it finally became the independent country of Namibia in 1990. With the focus on birds there wasn't much opportunity to learn about these cultures.

From the capital Windhoek, on the central high plateau, we travelled south west through desolate farming land and bare desert landscapes of rocky strata and desert dunes to Walvis Bay on the Atlantic Coast. The birding attractions there were the mudflats of the bay and the retention ponds of saltworks where the waders, flamingos and terns gathered.

Every day there was something unexpected or spectacular; the tiny lichen crust on the gravel plains at the saltworks just near the guano platform where thousands of cormorants

roosted, the Plains Zebras (below) and Black-faced Impala coming to drink at the campsite waterholes in Etosha, the vast expanse of the Etosha Plains and the challenge of finding the small brown birds in the immensity of the landscape.



There was also the thrill of boat trips on the Okavango and Zambezi Rivers with a local guide who found the special birds like the huge Pels Fishing Owl (below) and tiny Lesser Jacana, the African Wild Dogs making a kill beside a main highway or the thrill and power of 'the smoke that thunders, a very fitting name for Victoria Falls in full flood. I just couldn't believe we were seeing these things!



I was pleased I decided to take short videos as they captured that little bit more of our experience. In our talk we shared ones of a bright yellow and black male Lesser Masked Weaver advertising for a mate at his unusual bottle-shaped nests, a family of elephants walking to a waterhole, a male African Jacana protecting it's downy chick by carrying it across the lily pads under its wing and then the rush of vultures being fed at a vulture restaurant at a Victoria Falls lodge.

While we appreciated that the guides targeted special birds, one of the exciting aspects of the trip was that we never knew what birds, animals or landscapes we would see each day. We had sightings like a Banded Mongoose family searching a dry slope, strange desert-adapted plants, a herd of Giraffe ambling beside Etosha Pan, or the dawn encounter with a pair of Wood

Owls on the Okavango. For Doug the variety of livestock that shared the roads was a surprise, from goats, sheep and cattle, to donkeys.

Our accommodation added even more to the trip as in Africa they do accommodation so well. No bland motels but something unique in each place; from safari tents (with personal outdoor showers) hidden among rocky outcrops at Erongo Wilderness Lodge (below) to stylish chalets on the banks of the Zambezi River. It was very pleasant to end the day sharing a gin and tonic at bar of the outdoor dining areas, watching the Nightjars catch moths or the sunset over the Zambezi. I have been doing lots of reminiscing as there wasn't a lot of gin left in the bottle I brought along to the talk.



We hope everyone went away from our talk knowing more about Namibia and enjoyed seeing some of the stunning birds, wildlife and varied landscapes we travelled through.

**Last excursion: cancelled due to snow.**

Due to the weather forecast for the weekend the decision was made to cancel the excursion to Goobang National Park. And what a wise decision that was. The snow started in Orange Friday night and continued off and on until Sunday night. Roads were certainly dangerous and the best place to be was rugged up inside.



*Mt Canobolas from the Medds at Nashdale, 11/08/2019. Photo Jenny Medd*

Damage from the snow and wind a few days later is very obvious on the mountain with lots of trees and branches down and erosion of the banks of some roads. Three weeks later, on 29<sup>th</sup> August, a small amount of snow could still be seen at the base of a cliff at Devils Hole.



*Fallen limbs at monitoring site 3. Photo R Stapleton.*

**Committee News:** items discussed at the committee meeting were:

- Mt Canobolas – an update including progress on organisation of a delegation to Minister Kean.
- Spring Creek Reservoir - Orange City Council (OCC) decided not to open the reservoir to boating.
- Submissions to be made objecting to:
  - Gosling Creek Reserve Plan of Management provision for widening of paths to allow use by human-powered vehicles.
  - OCC proposal to reduce environmental flows into Summer Hill Creek from Suma Park Dam.
  - OCC proposal to lower the trigger point for extraction of water from the Macquarie River to supplement Orange's water supply.
- Excursion protocol is to remain.

**Mt Canobolas Update: NPWS Post Fire Monitoring Planning.** Report by R Stapleton.

Ranger Steve Woodhall gathered scientists and others together on 21<sup>st</sup> August to review all the post-fire monitoring that had been done in Mt Canobolas SCA. The aim of the meeting was to look at what had been achieved, what could be improved and to plan for the next 12 months. The group welcomed staff from the DPI Biosecurity Collections Unit who are interested in the insects and fungi of the mountain.

You will have read in earlier editions of the newsletter about the great results from the orchid surveys, the fauna surveys and the

Australian Museum's visit to find land snails and velvet worms. Dick highlighted important incidental finds in the August newsletter. There have also been spring and autumn vegetation surveys at 24 sites and bat ultra-sonic surveys at 20 sites in spring 2018.



Planning future post fire monitoring of Mt Canobolas. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Lesley Forward, NPWS Project Officer, summarised the significant findings. I'm sure you will agree the list below is impressive.

- 7 of the 14 known threatened species recorded (2 new for the SCA) (2 bats, Greater Glider, Powerful Owl, Dusky Woodswallow, Scarlet Robin, Flame Robin).
- 2 Powerful Owls recorded (a threatened species) – first records for the SCA.
- Another threatened bat recorded – *Falsistrellus tasmaniensis* Eastern False Pipistrelle.
- Bush Rat *Rattus fuscipes* (new record for SCA).
- Agile Antechinus (*Antechinus agilis*) confirmed in the SCA (12 animals) – their northern-most occurrence in NSW/Australia and a western outlier relative to the main distribution.
- 3 potentially new orchid species discovered, all extremely rare.
- Increased records of 2 new endemic orchids yet to be named.
- Expected new species/variant of Yellow Planarian Worm - new locations found and possibly 2 species, including the one with GT stripes.
- Several new locations of rare endemic Velvet Worm/Peripatus, one of these in a severely burnt area.
- A Water Skink (*Eulamprus heatwolei*) recorded at the extreme edge of its known distribution.

- Highland Copperhead (*Aspidytes ramsii*) – a high elevation population requiring genetic study.
- Numerous species recorded at the edge of their known distribution.
- Several Greater Gliders (threatened) and numerous Ring-tailed Possums recorded (Powerful Owl food).



The first Powerful Owl seen on Mt Canobolas.... stunning. Photo Dr Anne Kerle.

At the planning meeting Steve spoke about these fabulous results and thanked all involved in the various survey efforts. The group talked about priorities for the next 12 months and hoped the following could be organised:

- Spring Fauna Survey – repeat of the mammal trapping, bird surveys and spotlighting, probably sometime in early November. Volunteers, including bird surveyors, will be needed.
- A systematic survey of reptiles.
- Invertebrates and fungi surveys targeting specific species. Where possible to be done within the established monitoring sites.
- Spring Orchid Surveys – repeat of surveys at the 2018 sites as well as extending searches to other parts of the SCA. Co-ordinated by Col Bower these will start several weeks earlier than last year, probably in mid-October. Again, volunteers welcome.
- Heathland monitoring to study re-establishment patterns and mechanisms post fire. To be done by Col Bower in spring.
- Ultra-sonic bat surveys – repeat of the 2018 surveys.

It is also hoped that funds will be available to repeat the flora surveys in the next year. The meeting discussed a number of other aspects of the mountain that need to be better documented; however, funding would need to be found. These included the geology and surveys of

Aboriginal sites. The formation of a Friends of Mt Canobolas Group is still to be organised.

So, keep your ears to the ground to hear about opportunities to volunteer for some of the surveys. Have your helmet and PPE (personal protective equipment) ready as this is now a NPWS requirement. Everyone is also encouraged to record opportunistic sightings and submit them to NPWS at any time.

Let's trust that more exciting discoveries are made, and more is learnt about the recovery of this precious and unique conservation area, if and when this monitoring occurs.

### **Central West Environment Council Meeting** Report by Nick King.

Central West Environment Council (CWEC) met at Kandos on August 4. Delegates from eight groups, from Orange to Rylstone, were present. A large number of issues were identified through discussion of agenda items and reports delivered by delegates.

Issues of environmental biodiversity such as the protection of Mount Canobolas and the Gardens of Stone from inappropriate development were discussed. The publication of "Biodiversity Dreaming", a collection of papers on biodiversity and land management in the Central West, compiled by Cilla Kinross, was announced.

A number of the groups spoke about the ongoing impact of mining on the environment and their communities. This was with particular reference to the expansion of coal mines in the Mudgee district and the environmental and social effects of the proposed Regis gold mine at Kings Plains. The Gardens of Stone are also threatened by mining. Concerns were also expressed by Orange groups on the issue of mining exploration in the Orange district.

Water was an issue common to most groups. The Inland Rivers Network delivered a report on the parlous state of the Murray Darling Basin, investigations into water theft and mismanagement, and efforts to get the plan for the system back on track. Other water issues included those associated with the Regis gold mine proposal and proposed water management changes by Orange City Council. Information about local and regional water issues was

submitted by Orange Regional Water Security Alliance (ORWSA) in absentia.

Pollution was another issue addressed by some groups. This included the seasonal increase in particle pollution due to winter woodsmoke and the burning of waste for energy at the Mount Piper Power Station. Groups were invited to lodge submissions supporting a proposal from the National Environmental Management Pollution System to toughen up emission levels.

Should OFNCS members require further information from representatives of the above groups please contact Cilla Kinross at ckinross@csu.edu.au.

It was agreed at the meeting that CWEC will submit a bid to hold the 2020 Nature Conservation Council conference in Orange.

### **Dates for your Diary**

**National Threatened Species Day –  
7 September.**

### **Habitat Restoration along Summer Hill Creek at Clifton Grove – 13<sup>th</sup> September.**

This planting day is mainly for CSU staff and students, but community members would be welcome, too. Contact Cilla for details on ckinross@csu.edu.au.



**Strike 4 Climate Change – 20 September  
2.00 – 4.00 pm, Robertson Park, Orange or  
[find a strike near you.](#)**

For the first time in history, people across the world will walk out of work and school together for a global strike to demand action on the climate crisis. Young people from the SchoolStrike4Climate movement will lead the strikes. At least 33 regional communities in NSW are holding events. Let's support the students to demonstrate concern on this issue we are all experiencing.

**Latham's Snipe Counts** are on 21 September, 16 November and 18 January. Visit local wetlands and report any sightings.

**7-9<sup>th</sup> November 2019** – the annual Linnean Society of NSW Natural History Field Symposium in Katoomba. The theme is 'The Natural History of the Blue Mountains -

Geology, Flora, Fauna and Human Impacts.' Go to [Linnean Society of NSW](#) for details.

### **Sightings around Orange**

If you see anything interesting, please email [orangefieldnats@gmail.com](mailto:orangefieldnats@gmail.com) or post it on Facebook.

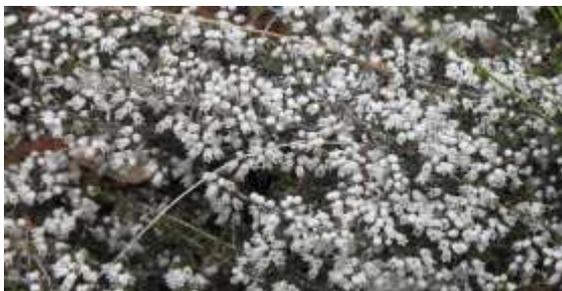
**Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** - a flock of upwards of 50 spotted by Jenny Medd on their Nashdale property feeding mainly on hakeas, though they also stopped by at some of the banksia, angophora and casuarina trees.



**CSU Peregrine Falcons** – Cilla reports 3 eggs have been laid as at 2<sup>nd</sup> September. A Peregrine was also heard and spotted at Borenore Caves.

**Flame Robins** – have migrated back to Mt Canobolas as have lots of honeyeaters.

**Shrubs on Mt Canobolas** – small plants of *Leucopogon fraseri* are in full flower in a few places as are the *Cryptandra amara* shrubs (below) along the rock shelf just east of Mitchells Way. Other shrubs species are starting to show buds.



**Spring flowering orchids** – Col has been surprised that some orchids are flowering despite the dry. At the Archery Reserve, at South Mullion, he found Blue Fingers, *Caladenia caerulea*. In Conimbla National Park he photographed orchid leaves of *Pterostylis nana*, *Pt stenosepala* and *Pt revoluta*.

While bird surveying in the north of Goobang National Park Rosemary spotted some orchid species that were starting to bud up and flower.

This included flowers of *Pterostylis nana* and buds on a species of *Chiloglottis*.

Further afield Chris Pratten reports, from Sydney, that he still has his resident breeding Striped Marsh Frogs. Recently he was surprised by a Ring-tail Possum in his garden and a Brush-tailed Possum in his neighbours shed.

### **Member Feedback**

On reading the article on flying-foxes Jenny Kenna emailed to say: 'In 1975 I took some photos of a bat colony in the willows at Gosling Creek Reservoir. Unfortunately, they are poor quality so I cannot tell what sort they were, at that stage my knowledge of bats was non-existent. They seemed to come regularly, and the Manager of the Research Station used to go with his gun and despatch them until they left. Sad.'

### **Creature of the Month**

#### **Mt Canobolas Starbush**

*Asterolasia rupestris* subsp. *rupestris*

By Jenny and Dick Medd, photos Dick Medd.



*Asterolasia* is an uncommon shrub on Mount Canobolas; indeed, many of the genus are rare and occur in disjunct populations. It's a member of the Rutaceae, known as the rue or citrus family. *Phebalium* is the only other member of this family on the mountain and the identify of both these inhabitants is now in question.

The late Bill Giles made the earliest collection of the Mt Canobolas Starbush in October 1948, followed by George Althofer in 1952, Ernie Constable in 1960 and most recently Paul Carmen in 2005. All specimens have so far been identified as *Asterolasia rupestris* subsp. *rupestris* B.J.Mole. This subspecies is distinguished by having flat leaves (as opposed to recurved leaves in subsp. *recurva*) and is known only from Mt Kaputar and Mt Canobolas. When Mole and co-workers examined the relevant part of the genus, they only had access to herbarium specimens for Mt

Canobolas, not fresh material. They even went so far as to suggest it may have become extinct on Mt Canobolas. Not so, but it is quite rare and restricted to a small area.



When recently provided with fresh specimens collected by Dick, botanists at the University of New England Botany Department considered that the material from Mt Canobolas differs from the Mt Kaputar material. Could it be another undescribed species endemic to Mt Canobolas? We will only know the answer if

scarce botanical research resources can be mustered to pursue the question.

Mt Canobolas Starbush grows to approx. 2 metres in heathy shrubland and woodland communities in skeletal/alluvial soils over trachyte outcrops. Like many of its relations it is covered in orange-brown stellate hairs, hence the common name Starbush. It blooms in late spring to early summer, with attractive lemon-yellow flowers.

Sadly, the population on Mt Canobolas was wholly consumed by the Feb. 2018 wildfire. But all is not lost as it is regenerating from what must have been a substantial seedbank. It will be interesting to follow how long it takes for the seedlings to flower and start replenishing the seedbank. Let's hope for a fire interval long enough to ensure the species doesn't end up on the slippery slope to extinction.

**Correction:**

In the last newsletter an incorrect scientific name for the Common Starling was given. The correct name is *Sturnus vulgaris*.

**OFNCS Future Speakers and Excursions**

- 10 October** 7.30 pm Live and Let Die - Protecting the Woodland Habitat of Cemeteries in Blayney Shire. Brian Parker, Supervisor Parks and Recreation, Blayney Shire.
- 13 October** Excursion to visit the Grassy Box Woodlands of the Blayney Shire cemeteries.
- 14 November** 7.00 pm Orange Nature Kids, Kate Willoughby, Coordinator. **NOTE** the earlier time.  
7.30 pm Biodiversity Mapping to improve the OCC LEP. Emily Cotterill, consultant from The Environmental Factor and employed by OCC for the project. This will be a combined meeting with ECCO.
- 17 November** Orchid search in Mt Canobolas SCA led by Col Bower.
- 12 December** Planning meeting – suggestions for the 2020 OFNCS program welcome.
- 15 December** Christmas party with ECCO.

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