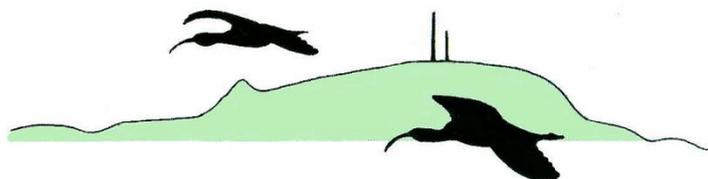


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER JUNE 2018

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 14th June 7.30pm

SPEAKER: Heidi Zimmer

TOPIC: The Ecology and Management of the Wollemi pine

NEW VENUE: Home & 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

Saturday-Sunday, 16–17th June
(overnight stay)

Meet at 12 noon

**at the Ganguddy Campground,
Dunns Swamp, Wollemi National Park
See details below**

Please Note

Our website is having technical difficulties at the moment and we are working with a new provider to get it running again.

Next Meeting

Heidi Zimmer is a botanist and ecologist with the Office of Environment and Heritage. She completed her PhD at the University of Melbourne on the ecology of the Wollemi Pine. She has worked for the Vietnamese Academy of Forest Science in Hanoi, for the Arthur Rylah Institute on grasslands and arid woodlands and completed a Masters including tree-ring research in the highlands of PNG.

Next Excursion

We will be meeting Heidi at the Ganguddy Campground at Dunn's Swamp at lunchtime on Saturday 16th June. She will likely camp there and leave mid morning on Sunday. Those members who wish to camp can choose to do so but note that there are camping fees applicable

(see:<http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/camping-and-accommodation/campgrounds/dunns-swamp-ganguddy-campground>)

Alternative accommodation options are given below. We are hoping to nightspot some quolls on Saturday evening.

Dick and Jenny Medd will stay on Sunday to lead a walk if anyone wants to explore the park further.

Accommodation suggestions for those who don't want to camp include:

- Kandos Fairways Motel (02) 6379 4406
- Franks' Breakaway Farmstay
<http://www.franksbreakaway.com.au>
- Wilderness Bunkhouse (02) 6379 6244
<http://wildernessbunkhouse.com.au>

Last Meeting - The Status of Vegetation Communities in the Central West

Summary by Rosemary approved by Col Bower

Former OFNCS President and botanist **Col Bower** started his talk by reflecting on the impact of Aboriginal burning practices on vegetation. He noted that the vegetation was not just a product of the vegetation itself but also of the use of fire. Since Europeans arrived the use of fire has been restricted and this has allowed trees to grow and the vegetation thicken up.

This set the scene as Col outlined the status of vegetation in the Central West and the factors affecting it including the impact of clearing since Europeans arrived.

The Central West area he talked about covers the Macquarie, Cudgegong, Bogan and Castlereagh River catchments between the Great Dividing Range and the Darling River. This big area is topographically, climatically and geologically diverse, and supports correspondingly diverse vegetation.

Eight of the twelve vegetation formations described by Keith (2004) for NSW occur and are different types of forest, woodland, grassland, shrubland and wetland. Vegetation classes are below formations in the

classification hierarchy and there are 25 vegetation classes in the Central West.



The native vegetation of this area is among the mostly highly cleared in Australia with most vegetation classes having been 50% cleared or more historically. The most cleared types are all five grassy woodland classes, followed by the riverine plain woodlands and the western slopes grasslands. The least reduced vegetation types are various arid communities dominated by shrubs (Acacias), mallee and chenopods, as well as Inland Floodplain Woodlands (Black Box) and Shrublands (Lignum), the Eastern Riverine Forests (River Oak) and the Inland Rocky Hill Woodlands.

The next level down in the classification hierarchy is vegetation community and there are 130 in the Central West. Col talked about how this is a somewhat fluid concept owing to variation in community composition across the landscape, such that some communities are more narrowly defined than others. The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage is gradually producing and refining a standard set of communities for planning, assessment and mapping purposes.... something that Col is looking forward to.

Of the 107 Threatened Ecological Communities in NSW, 9 occur in the Central West. All are on highly productive parts of the landscape and have been heavily cleared for agriculture, but they would also have been those areas most favoured by wildlife and indigenous people. What is left on farms is being grazed and is not in the best condition. In all communities the best remnants occur on roadsides, TSRs, reserves and cemeteries.

From his observations over the past 40 years Col has seen a continuing declining trend for native vegetation, despite the best efforts of government agencies and many dedicated people on the ground. In his view the forces

unleashed by the arrival of Europeans in Australia are leading to an inexorable decline, unstoppable without a dramatic rethink of land management. He sees the main powerful negative influences in this decline as population growth, changed fire regimes, feral animals, weeds and the sale of Crown Land.

Col concluded that there needs to be a major shift in public attitudes and political will with the only long-term solution to conservation of ecological communities being a conservation reserve system with sufficient management resources to properly protect it. He also saw that a major gap was in the protection of small relatively undisturbed remnants that often contain the last near pristine examples of threatened communities. There is currently no robust mechanism for identifying, cataloguing and preserving these last tiny reminders of the original flora. In Col's view, local government needs to be empowered to protect such remnants at the local level.

Last excursion – Heifer Station Creek TSR

13 May 2018

Text by Cilla Kinross, Jenny Medd and Rosemary Stapleton. Photos by Cilla and Rosemary

Despite a long period of dry weather, obvious recent grazing, and an inauspicious season for a plant survey, this excursion yielded a respectable plant list. This was no doubt aided by the botanical expertise of Col Bower and Dick Medd.



The TSR was in surprisingly good condition, with some pleasing signs of eucalypt regeneration in places, indicating a low intensity grazing regime. It is essentially an area of grassy woodland containing virtually no shrub layer but with large old-growth trees with hollows. Cilla was surprised that the creek had not been fenced off and while the willows had been controlled, any planting effort was quite minimal. All the listed eucalypts from an OFNCS survey decades ago were found however there was some debate about the *Eucalyptus canobolensis/rubida* intergrade (photo below).



The reserve lessees were surprised that we had not obtained permission before coming on ‘their’ land. However, TSRs are open to the public during daylight hours, even when leased. Cilla has since spoken to the lessees and cleared up this misunderstanding, so we should be able to return without any hassles.

The day was cold and windy and the bird list quite short. We also saw rabbits, Eastern Grey Kangaroos, a skink, two moths, several ant species and heard one *Crinia signifera* (Common Eastern Froglet). A spring survey would undoubtedly add a number of species to these lists.

Native Plant Species - 46 in total

Trees:

Acacia dealbata

Eucalyptus blakelyi (Blakely’s red gum)
bridgesiana (Apple box)
canobolensis/rubida
 (intergrade)

dives (Broad-leaf peppermint)
macrorhyncha (Red stringybark)
meliiodora (Yellow box)
pauciflora (Snow gum)
stellulata (Black sally)
viminalis (Ribbon gum)

Groundcovers, grasses, water-plants, etc.:

Acaena novae-zelandiae (Bidgee widgee)
Asperula conferta (Common woodruff)
Bothriochloa macra (Red grass)
Carex appressa (Tall sedge)
Carex breviculmis (Short-stem sedge)
Carex inversa
Cymbonotus lawsonianus (Bears-ear)
Desmodium varians
Dichondra repens (Kidney weed)
Dysphania pumilio (formerly *Chenopodium*)
Geranium solanderi (Australian crane’s-bill)
Glycine tabacina
Hibbertia obtusifolia
Hydrocotyle laxiflora (Stinking pennywort)
Juncus australis
Juncus sp.
Juncus subsecundus (Fingered rush)
Juncus usitatus (Common rush)
Lomandra longifolia
Lomandra multiflora
Lythrum salicaria (Purple loosestrife)
Microlaena stipoides (Weeping grass)
Oxalis sp.
Paspalum distichum (Native water couch)
Poa labillardierei
Potamogetan sulcatus (Pondweed)
Rubus parvifolius (Native raspberry)
Rytidosperma pilosa (formerly *Danthonia*)
Schoenoplectus validus
Scleranthus sp. Fitzs Hill (Knawel)
Senecio pinnatifolius
Sorghum leiocladum (Native sorghum)
Themeda triandra (Kangaroo grass)
Typha orientalis (Broadleaf cumbungi)
Urtica incisa (Stinging nettle)
Wahlenbergia gracilis (Blue bells)

Introduced species (“weeds”) - 21 in total

Acetosella vulgaris (Sorrel)
Carthamus lanatus (Saffron thistle)
Centaureum calcitrapa (Star thistle)
Chamaecytisus palmensis (Tagasaste or Tree Lucerne)
Cirsium vulgare (Spear thistle)
Conyza bonariensis (Fleabane)
Crataegus monogyna (Hawthorn)
Cyperus eragrostis (Umbrella sedge)
Dactylis glomerata (Cocksfoot)

Hypericum perforatum (St John's wort)
Hypochoeris radicata (Flatweed)
Mentha spicata (Garden mint, Spearmint)
Plantago lanceolata (Lamb's ears)
Rosa rubiginosa (Sweet briar)
Rumex brownii (Swamp dock)
Sanguisorba minor (Salad burnet)
Silybum marianum (Variegated thistle)
Trifolium sp. (Clover)
Verbascum virgatum (Twiggy-mullein)
Verbena bonariensis (Purple-top)
Vicia sp. (Vetch)

Bird Species - 12 in total

Collared Sparrowhawk	1
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2
Galah	1
Crimson Rosella	5
Eastern Rosella	13
Superb Fairy-wren	5
Noisy Miner	25
Striated Pardalote	2
Australian Magpie	3
Grey Butcherbird	1
Australian Raven	3
Common Starling	50

NPWS Post Fire Recovery Planning

Meeting for Mt. Canobolas SCA, held at

O.A.I., 14th May 2018. *Report by Jenny Medd*

This meeting, called by Steve Woodhall, was attended by a group of invited botanists and fauna experts (including a significant number of OFNCS members) as well as NPWS rangers to discuss a post-fire recovery plan. Steve presented his "Wish List" consisting of:

- a project officer to manage the immediate actions (hopefully part-time for 2 years, i.e. the equivalent of one year full-time)
- volunteers
- a nest-box program
- walking track repairs, and
- weed control,

before the group split up to consider and compile "To-Do Lists". These were addressing his 5 W's (What / Why / Who / Where / When) for Flora and Fauna separately. The compilations were discussed with the whole group before again separating to do a similar exercise covering "How" and a final whole group look at the resulting suggestions.

A critical resource for immediate planning will be the production of a map showing the fire intensity across the S.C.A., marked up with the quadrats used by John Hunter in his

2002 flora survey. Some of those quadrats will form a basis for the recovery and monitoring work already anticipated in the coming weeks and months. An O.E.H. "S.O.S." program is already in place for *Eucalyptus canobolensis*, and the same should occur for *Prostanthera gilesii* and the Endangered Lichen community.

Before the meeting disbanded information was presented on NPWS's requirements for Volunteers, supplying those present with the paperwork for consideration (Volunteer Agreement form, Registration form, Statement of Volunteer Duties and Timesheet). Options were discussed including starting up a fresh new group for volunteers, forming a sub-group of an existing society, or establishment of a local sub-branch of the National Parks Association. Steve is hoping to call a public meeting to gauge the community response and consider all options.

It is hoped that the Draft Fire Recovery Plan, initially for consideration within NPWS, will be ready by late June or early in July.

Note: The new Plan of Management for Mt Canobolas SCA is due for release soon. There will be a 3-month consultation period and this will be an opportunity for you to have a say on the future of the mountain.



Conservation in Action Conference

Report by Rosemary Stapleton

The publicity for this conference said 'think waterways, natural landscapes, native flora and fauna, and threatened species'. The range of speakers was impressive, from significant research scientists to managers and workers from local projects. There were also LLS staff there as well as landholders, Landcarers and citizen scientists, including Cilla, Jane and myself.

Keynote speaker Dr Ian Lowe, one of Australia's most respected environmental scientists, raised many of the environmental issues we are familiar with. He talked about:

- the ignorance in society of biological diversity in Australia and the evidence of climate change
- the need for use of sophisticated modern technology to ensure water is used effectively (such as adopting technology used by the Romans ...

pipes for irrigation!) and the need for more effective use of harvested water

- connectivity being critical
- the lack of adequate long-term monitoring and data collection
- ecological integrity being seen to be less important than economic production
- the inequity of government funding with the \$ value spent on threatened species being 300 times less than the proposed tax cuts
- the importance of addressing the driving forces of change and to do prevention rather than cure.

Dr Anne Kerle, the next keynote speaker, reviewed the historic changes that have occurred in the Central West where declines in species diversity and loss are being ignored. While threatened species could act as flag bearers for ecological communities, she argued that with 357 threatened species in the Central West catchments there was not enough funding to have recovery plans for them all so there needed to be a change from species specific plans to landscape wide action.

Over the two days we heard about species specific projects such as for Regent Honeyeaters, Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies, Spotted-tailed Quolls, Booroolong Frogs, Macquarie Perch, Superb Parrots, Squirrel Gliders and Pelicans. This was balanced by talks on creating, monitoring and management of habitats such as active water management in the Macquarie Marshes, Landcare activities, construction of the Putta Bucca wetlands at Mudgee, if revegetation is encouraging Noisy Miners and the many factors that inhibit positive biodiversity outcomes from offsetting.

Highlights for me were 'Dr Dave' Watson, who I am sure convinced everyone there that mistletoe was a significant friend of many species. His research has found that clumps of mistletoe ameliorate temperature and create a microclimate that benefits many animals and insects. This has even led to a project introducing mistletoe to Plane Trees in Melbourne to see if this will influence the higher temperatures in urban environments. He also encouraged everyone to think of mistletoe as 'factories of litter' because of the amount of leaves they drop. David has found that there were many more insects/hectare under trees with mistletoe than trees without it. When considering revegetation, he encouraged people to consider the leaf litter that will be created.

Brian Parker, Blayney Shire Councils Supervisor of Parks and Recreation, spoke on 'Live and Let Die -managing EEC in an active cemetery. I was impressed with how Brian, over many years, has made small positive changes to managing the cemeteries and convinced sceptics that this could also protect threatened woodland habitat. This is important as there is only 1% remaining in the Shire. Recently he has experimented with cultural cool fire burns.

Michael Drielsma, from OEH and UNE, outlined the threatening process of habitat fragmentation. Modelling on the influence of climate projections on the outlook for biodiversity painted a scary picture. He aimed to identify corridors which species could move along in the future and so help identify the best places where conservation action could be done now.

Dr Damien Michael, from the Fenner School ANU, gave insights from long term monitoring of reptiles on rocky outcrops in revegetated and restored rural landscapes. And how good would it have been to be Geoffrey Kay looking at how geckos move around fragmented landscapes by dusting them with glow-in-the dark powder! He concluded connectivity could be improved for movement of geckos by restoring mature tree spacing to 80m apart, having low pasture height at certain times and directional sowing of crops.

The conference was certainly interesting and stimulating. Program details are at <http://www.cwcewa.com.au/conservation-in-action-2018/> Some abstracts and presentations are also meant to be available there.

The conference was organised as a partnership between Central Tablelands Local Land Services, Central Tablelands Landcare and the Central West Councils Environment & Waterways Alliance. I would like to thank Central Tablelands Landcare for sponsoring my attendance.

Key Biodiversity Area Workshop

Dubbo, 19 May 2018. *Report by Rosemary Stapleton*

Jane Paul and I attended this workshop in Dubbo. Being a birder, I was keen to learn about Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and the Birddata phone app which I hoped would make it easier for me to enter my bird surveys.

The KBA movement is promoted and supported by BirdLife organisations around the world. It aims to identify nature's hotspots; the places that matter to birds and wildlife. Science

and grass roots approaches are combined to monitor and take conservation action in these areas. For details check out <http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org>

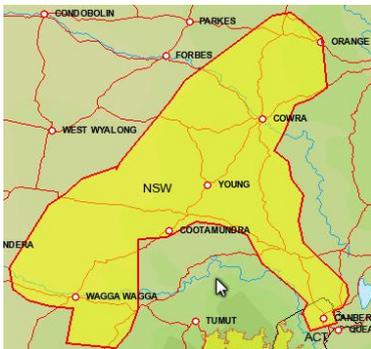
BirdLife Australia and OEH organised the workshop at Western Plains Zoo. Golo Maurer, BirdLife Australia's Important Bird and Biodiversity Area Program Manager, explained the history of KBAs, their strength in countries like South Africa and progress in Australia. The aim for each KBA is to have a person act as a KBA Guardian to co-ordinate monitoring and conservation activity. Each year the guardian completes an Easter Health-check so a snapshot of the status of Australian KBAs can be compiled.



Around 50 people from 5 KBAs looked at conservation actions they could take. The KBAs were the Macquarie Marshes, Norfolk Island, the Central NSW Malleefowl KBA based on Yathong and Nombinnie Nature Reserves, Tuggerah KBA and the South West Slopes of NSW.

Jane and I joined people and surveyors from Cowra and Grenfell to discuss the South West Slopes KBA. Its key species are Superb and Swift Parrots, Diamond Firetail and Painted Honeyeaters. This is the largest KBA and is a challenge as it covers such a large area due to the range of the Superb Parrot.

The SW Slopes KBA



Elisabeth Karplus, the KBA's Guardian, lead the discussion and we agreed to focus actions in the Cowra and Grenfell areas where routine surveys have taken place for many years. As actions such as revegetation and work with local councils have been done before it was decided to focus on Superb Parrots and an education program with local school children. Through them it is hoped to

spread knowledge to their parents. Regular monitoring by the Grenfell and Cowra groups will still be important.

It was apparent from the feedback session that some other KBA's had significant involvement from government agencies or local councils and the community members present planned to build on the actions these people were already doing.

The workshop ended with an outline and try out of the Birddata app. Golo stressed the importance of surveys to monitor the status of the threatened species in each KBA. It is hoped that the immediacy of the app will lead to more surveys being done, however for some newbies like me it might take a while to get used to it.

Creature of the Month

***Pyrenoma* sp. A first responder, ecologically speaking.**

Text by Dick Medd, image by Helmut Berndt



The February fires on Mt Canobolas evoked many reactions – for this eye-catching fungus it meant a chance to do its thing as a pioneer. Like many phoenicoid fungi [meaning 'arising from the ashes'] the spores of *Pyrenoma* are stimulated to germinate by fire (or just heat) and the cottony white mycelia grow very rapidly and are able to colonize large areas quickly. Part of this response is due to heating also killing other soil micro-organisms that would likely compete with, or be antagonistic to, this fungus.

The species was photographed about a month after the fire and minor rain event. The individual fruiting bodies are only about a millimetre in diameter but appeared in such profusion that they blended to create orange carpets across the burnt soil, mostly in ash beds. No doubt the carpets serve to bind the surface against erosion, but rills were evident through the carpets in some places.

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 8th July - Biodiversity Forum, Orange City Bowling Club, 10 am – 4 pm.

Details provided by Cilla Kinross

10.00 - 12.30: New Biodiversity Legislation: Important changes we should know about. Speakers from Environmental Defenders' Office and Nature Conservation Council followed by a workshop: Where to from here?

1.30 - 4.00: Mount Canobolas – a case study for conservation of biodiversity. Speakers: Dr Col Bower – the conservation significance of Mt. Canobolas as well as speakers from the National Parks Association with experience of the issue of biking in parks. There will be a discussion on the mountain bike proposal and on a campaign strategy for the best outcome for the mountain.

Cost: entry by donation of between \$5 - \$10 pp. Tea/coffee included. Lunch details to be confirmed, however buffet lunch will be available (\$15).

Organised by Central West Environment Council. For further information contact Cilla Kinross at ckinross@csu.edu.au

29th July, Sunday. National Tree Day Planting planned at Bloomfield Bushland

from Rosemary Stapleton, member OFNCS and the Bloomfield Bushland Advisory Group

If you've driven along Bloomfield Road or walked along the track in Bloomfield Park you will have noticed bushland (and invasive plants) on the northern side of the road. The bushland is on health service land and a small group of people, including health staff, have been working to have this area improved. Whilst reduction of the fire risk is important, it is recognised that having a more attractive area for walking and being in the bush will be of benefit to patients, staff and visitors. A walking track to link the health campus to Bloomfield Park has already been built and a map is being designed.

Recently the Bloomfield Bushland Advisory Group was successful in getting an Orange Credit Union Community Grant to do some planting in the bushland on National Tree Day. The funds will also be used to control some of the weeds, such as poplars, blackberries and broom. There are already some natives in the cleared area and more will be planted to add to the diversity. All the

organisations on the Advisory Group will be lending a hand.

National Tree Day is Australia's largest tree-planting and nature care event. It is an opportunity for you to do something positive for your community and the environment by reconnecting with nature. National Tree Day started in 1996 and since then more than 3.8 million people have planted 24 million trees and plants and it's still growing.

Put the 29th July in your diary and [join in and make a difference!](#)

Of course, the planting will be dependent on some rain between now and the end of July!

13th August to 8th October 2018, OFNCS Display at Orange Regional Museum

Text by Rosemary Stapleton, photos from Jennifer Kenna

In May the Museum asked local community organisations if they wished to have a small display at the museum. Themes could be Orange and district history, local people, events, clubs and/or historic businesses. Some of the OFNCS committee agreed that it would be worthwhile to apply to highlight the significant achievements of the Society over the last 43 years. The Museum agreed and several members are meeting with museum staff on 6th June to design the display.

A few years ago, Jenny Medd collated lists of most of the talks, excursions and submissions that had been made. Records from 1988, 1989 and 1990 are missing so if you have anything from these years please get in touch with Jenny or myself.

As there was only one early photo the hunt has been on for others. Some of you might enjoy the stories and photos below from Jennifer Kenna.

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

OFNCS History

In our search for items for the museum display Jenny Medd contacted Jennifer Kenna and luckily Jennifer K has lots of slides from excursions from the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the faces are familiar, even if a little older now and others can't be remembered. The display also prompted some story telling at the Heifer Station Creek TSR excursion. Maybe at a future meeting a short 'slide show' might be organised to help with naming the unknown people. Here are a few gems.

1986 Mammal Trapping in the South Mullion Range

When sending through the slides Jennifer K said 'The thing I remember about the Easter trapping is that Paul Meeth had a tall silver bucket, he said I've got 2 Funnel Web Spiders. He looked in the bucket and said 'Oh! there's only one.' I was standing behind him, I looked down and there was the spider on the bottom of his baggy shorts leg. I had a clip board in my hand so I wacked it onto the ground. Phew!!!' Paul certainly remembered this as he had related it at the recent Heifer Station Creek excursion. Dick Medd also related that the toenails of the Antechinus they caught were painted with nail polish to help identify ones that had been caught before ... and one ended up being quite colourful as it was caught three times. *Photo: Col Bower and Dick Medd measuring a Sugar Glider at South Mullion.*



1991 OFNCS Excursion

Image from Jennifer K of the 'didn't quite make it to the Gardens of Stone walk'. Pictured are Herb May, Len Kenna, Paul Meeth and Bill Pippin, the 'poor old buggers who had to have a sleep at lunch time'.

