ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2024

Next Talk
Thursday 10 October – 7.30pm AEDST

Sticky nightshade – an emerging weed and some biosecurity actions we can all do.
Speaker: Dr Marita Sydes,

Face to face at Nguluway Ngurang Senior Citizens Centre North Room
(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

Committee Meeting - 6.30pm AEDST

Excursion
Sunday 13 October
Wambool Nature Reserve
Meet at Orange High School Bus Bay at 9am.

Next Meeting
Thursday 10 October – 7.30pm AEDST.
Sticky nightshade – an emerging weed and some biosecurity actions we can all do.

Speaker - Dr Marita Sydes, State Priority Weed Coordinator with DPIRD - Agriculture and Biosecurity, who works in the weeds team at the Orange Agricultural Institute on Forest Rd.

Marita will give a presentation on sticky nightshade (*Solanum sisymbriifolium*) an emerging weed in the central tablelands.

Sticky Nightshade flower. Photo Marita Sydes.

She will provide information on identification, native species that look alike, the impacts of this weed and management being undertaken in the region. Understanding the role that we all play in the spread of weeds or animal and plant diseases is important. The talk will also look at some simple practical actions everyone can undertake to help play their part in preventing the spread of weeds, plant and animal diseases. Marita is also happy to speak about her role, including online sales of plants that should not be sold.

Next Excursion – Sunday 13 October,
Wambool Nature Reserve.
Leader Helmut Berndt.
Meet at Orange High Bus Bay at 9 am.

The NPWS website says the significance of Wambool relates to its unusual geology on the edge of the Bathurst plains. As the granite gives way to other rock types the open grassland with scattered trees changes to a woodland of stunted trees with a rich understory of shrubs and herbs. This is an orchids hotspot.

Wambool is 20kms east of Bathurst so it will be a full day. NPWS have given us permission to drive into the reserve so 4WD is recommended. We will carpool to reduce vehicle use on the tracks.

Photo Helmut Berndt.

There will be some walking on the rocky slopes so wear sturdy footwear, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt. Bring water, your lunch, and other necessities. On the excursion you will be responsible for your own safety. Please bring any medication you might need and details of an emergency contact, which we hope we won't have to use.

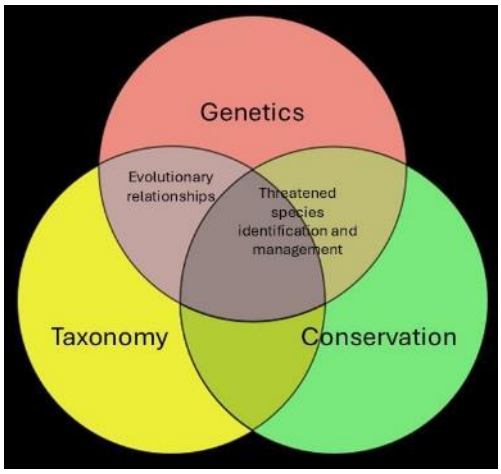
There will be a toilet stop in Bathurst as there are no toilets in the reserve. It is also the Bathurst race weekend so traffic will be heavy.

Last Talk –
Thursday 12 September - Adventures in Orchid Research.
Speaker - Heidi Zimmer, Research Scientist, Australian National Herbarium.

Report by Rosemary Stapleton and Heidi Zimmer. Most photos from Heidi or her presentation.

Heidi presented a very informative talk on orchid research and taxonomy which touched on species identification, naming, and the implications of modern technology. She often mentioned Dr Mark Clements and Dr David Jones and how they have made significant contributions since the 1970s, including in formally describing many orchid species.

The orchid research that Heidi is involved in is centred around taxonomy, genetics and conservation which can be distinct but also overlap (below).



Most of the world's orchids are epiphytic (tree dwelling), rather than terrestrial (ground dwelling). Australia is unusual in that 85% of our orchid species are ground dwelling. An updated genetic family tree of orchids was published earlier this year and shows a distinct group of ground-dwelling orchids (the Diurideae) with their diversity centred on Australia. There are around 1,700 described Australian orchids, being 7% of Australian plant species. Heidi noted that orchids 'punch above their weight' as threatened species, with 14% being federally listed as threatened.

Most orchid species have been described using morphological taxonomy by researchers and collectors. They use the following means:

- herbarium specimens and notes. There are ~70,000 orchid specimens at the National Herbarium.
- floral dissection cards (below) pioneered by Mark Clements and David Jones. These allow better comparison than the herbarium specimens as they are not squashed and distorted. One of Heidi's roles is to have these cards digitised which will, in future, allow AI to be used to help with measurement of tiny features.
- spirit collections, which give a three-dimensional view, but DNA cannot be easily extracted from these specimens.
- photos and
- living collections.

A floral dissection card for Acianthus collinus (Inland Mosquito-orchid), Conimbla NP.

To differentiate species, checks and comparisons are made with similar species. The first steps are to check the morphology of the plants as above, and investigate the species ecology, such as pollinators, time of flowering and habitat. Genomic analysis (which looks at many genes) can also give important insight into the relationships among specimens and species.

Genomic analysis, looking at both nuclear and chloroplast DNA, is helping to clarify some of the morphological differences and similarities among orchid species. This analysis typically requires about 1 cm^2 of leaf which has usually

been dried down in silica. It has had such an influence that many people are now reluctant to describe a species without it. Heidi and others are working on various methods of gathering and analysing the DNA of orchid species to provide a reference phylogeny (family tree) of Australian orchid species. This will allow comparison of already described species, and placement of any new species.

Heidi discussed the example of *Corybas dowlingii*, listed as threatened, which has a dark pink flower. The main difference with two other similar species is flower colour. Genetic analysis of many plants from these species showed that the 3 species did not form distinct clusters on the genetic tree so may in fact not be different species. Research is ongoing.

Many Australian orchid species have evolved recently, and for this reason they may be only slightly morphologically and/or genetically different to their relatives. The 'precautionary principle' in conservation suggests we should protect these populations/species if there is any chance that they could be different.

Understanding what an orchid species is, and where it is, is important for conservation management. There are many threats to orchid species, often because of their close connections with the environment, such as through their need for specific pollinators or fungi to survive. Heidi also discussed the collateral damage that Myrtle Rust can have. Some orchids rely on plant species that are affected by Myrtle Rust and if those plants die so will the orchids.

Heidi has been at the herbarium for about 4 years. As her role at the Australian National Herbarium covers Australia her field trips have focused on Norfolk Island and the wet tropics of Kakadu where little research has been done. Work in Kakadu will be done with Traditional Owners.

Heidi and Mark Clements searching for orchids on Norfolk Island.

While differences of opinion exist about orchid taxonomy there is now an Orchid Taxonomy Advisory Group Australasia (OTAGA), made up of professionals from different backgrounds, whose role is to critically review the data and clarify the taxonomic and naming challenges that often arise. The plethora of databases, sometimes containing orchid records and sightings with varying names, presents challenges for researchers, governments, land managers and citizen scientists. Clarification about 'what constitutes a species' and its 'correct' name is important as often these data are used to prioritise conservation action.

Heidi is looking forward to a future in orchid research – there is no shortage of important work to do. Future work will be more of the same by undertaking more formal descriptions, more threatened species delimitation and more 'gap filling' fieldwork. She hopes it will also include researching the impacts of climate change and using AI for morphometrics.

Time passed quickly during Heidi's talk and questions were asked about DNA reference libraries, DNA sequencing of confusing local species such as *Pterostylis* and *Diuris*, where there seems to be lots of variation within and between species. Heidi was also asked about the tape used to stick the specimens on floral cards (Magic tape) and the cost of genetic testing. She said it can range from several thousand dollars to ~$100,000 for a sample plate (96 samples) to sequence the DNA but it depends on the analysis. Then there is the challenge of analysing the data!

I am sure Heidi's knowledge and passion for orchids was infectious and many of us went away with a greater understanding of the science of identification and naming of species.

<u>Last Excursion</u> – Sunday 15 September, Killonbutta Precinct, South-West Woodlands Nature Reserve.
Report by Alison Downing, with bird list by Rosemary Stapleton.

The weather forecast for Killonbutta was somewhat daunting but to our surprise and delight, we enjoyed a fine, sunny day, and within the shelter of the woodlands, we were well protected from the strong, cold winds. The drive from Orange took us north-west through farming country, and after a brief stop at Molong, we drove a further 11 km west to the reserve. On the way, we were interested to see limestone outcrops at Molong, and then a considerable change in country at Killonbutta, from open farmland to Cypress Pine (*Callitris endlicheri*) and eucalypt woodlands on granite slopes and rocky granite outcrops.

Kevin and I are not familiar with the region, and fortunate to have Rosemary and Catherine Stapleton as our guides for the day. They explained to us that Killonbutta is one of many (27) sections of the South-West Woodland Nature Reserve in the South Western Slopes of New South Wales. Many were previously state forests and the names of many of those forests, including Killonbutta, continue to be used today. Killonbutta is unique amongst these reserves for its granite outcrops and granitic soils.

We were delighted by the wattles in full flower along many sections of road within the reserve, and also by smaller shrubby yellow golden peas (Eggs and Bacon) that lined the road. Our first stop was in mixed *Callitris* and *Eucalyptus* woodland, with splendid outcrops of granite and tumbled rocky boulders. The forest, at first sight, appeared to be rather grim, dark and forbidding, but underfoot, among a bright green carpet of low growing grasses were glorious gems; white flowered *Wurmbea dioica*, blue flowered *Ajuga australis*, golden yellow *Bulbine bulbosa*, a multitude of creamy *Stackhousia viminia*, and many splendid terrestrial orchids. Names for these I will leave to other more knowledgeable members of the Orange Field Naturalists.

Only two bryophytes have been recorded from Killonbutta and I identified five more moss species from this site alone, some on soil, others growing either on or between the granite boulders. Wedged in between boulders were clusters of resurrection ferns, *Cheilanthes sieberi*, renowned for their ability to survive in exceptionally hot and dry environments, rather than the cool, moist surroundings with which we usually associate ferns.

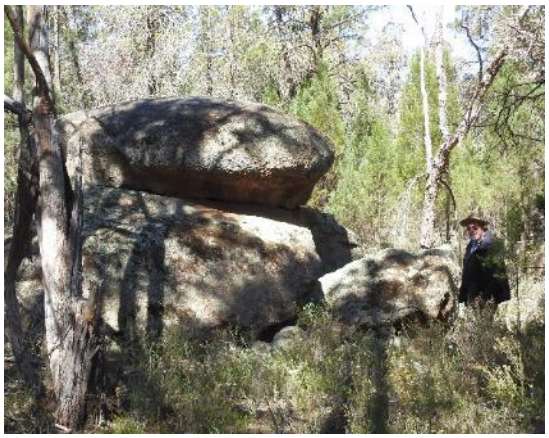
A prostrate pea, perhaps Templetonia stenophylla, that attracted lots of interest. Photo Alison Downing.

We drove on to a second site, further to the west, again with mixed woodland of *Callitris* and *Eucalyptus*. While others wandered Sandra spent time sorting one of the piles of rubbish and taking home all the recyclable material. A bit further along this trail, we encountered a surprising area of heath on broad, flattened expanses of granite with adjoining rock piles. These were rich with epacrids such as the white flowered *Leucopogon*, probably *L. virgatus* and others, such as *Calytrix tetragona*. To our great delight, *Stypandra glauca* grew here in abundance. I run out of words to describe the actual flower colour of *Stypandra*, the richest electric blue imaginable, almost impossible to capture with a mobile phone camera.

The electric blue of Stypandra glauca. Photo Alison Downing

On the relatively flat granite exposures, shallow layers of soil supported classic biological soil crusts, with a suite of mosses different from those found earlier, and also at least two liverwort (*Fossombronia*) species.

The probability is that after rain, there would be visible numerous additional thallose liverwort species, such as *Riccia* and *Asterella*. And of course, all through, terrestrial orchids to die for! There was just so much to see, we missed out on the cycad *Macrozamia secunda*. Next time! Here we enjoyed lunch at a site with a very conveniently arranged log for those of us who had not brought their own seating. (See group photo at the end of the newsletter.)



Peter Toedter at one of the granite outcrops that wasn't so flat. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Our last stop was on the western side of the reserve, again with a mix of eucalypts and other species, including *Acacia doratoxylon*. We walked up to a low rise with granite outcrops, and found yet more electric blue *Stypandra glauca*, and of course, more terrestrial orchids. A first for me was to see native yam, *Microseris lanceolata*. Many years ago, James Kohen, a colleague from Macquarie University, and I, had searched the Cumberland Plain (the broad area that reaches from Sydney to the Blue Mountains) woodlands and grasslands looking for this elusive species, but without success. Brilliant to see it today, thanks to Marita and Orange Field Naturalists members. Here we again found more heath on the shallow soils of granite exposures, with *Calytrix tetragona* in abundance. Another species new to me was *Grevillea floribunda*, with glorious rusty golden orange flowers and greyish green leaves. Probably the most extraordinary find of the afternoon was by Hai of the orange flowered carnivorous plant, *Drosera glanduligera*. Apparently, this is an ephemeral annual plant that grows during winter and flowers from late winter through to the end of spring. It differs from other *Drosera* species, in that it has outer, non-sticky tentacles that, when triggered, snap to launch prey onto the sticky, central tentacles in the depression at the centre of the leaf where the prey can be devoured. It differs from *Stylidium* and Venus fly traps in that the *snap tentacles*, once triggered, cannot reset.

Orange flowered carnivorous plant, Drosera glanduligera. Photo Hai Wu.

Alison and Hai discussing the Drosera glanduligera. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

A fly, still alive, caught in one of the more common Drosera plants. It fascinated Helmut. Photo Helmut Berndt.

It was impossible not to notice the damage that has been done to the reserve: trees cut illegally for firewood, rubbish dumped, bike trails established, but for all that, Killonbutta is quite

remarkable, not only for the many species of beautiful and fascinating orchids, but also for the many other beautiful and unique species that occur there.

Two highlights of our trip home were firstly the family of Choughs by the side of the road pointed out to us by Rosemary and Catherine, and secondly, the spectacular view from the Scenic Drive across to Mount Canobolas which clearly illustrates that Mount Canobolas is the result of multiple volcanic eruptions, not just one! Kurrajong trees dominate the landscape here, and curiously, as Rosemary pointed out, young seedlings are not present under Kurrajong trees in the paddocks, but there were often many young seedlings growing under the *Eucalyptus* trees along the road verge, probably carried there, and dropped by birds.

There is never enough time on these excursions to see and do everything we might want to do, but Kevin and I would like to return to visit Yuranighs Aboriginal Grave Historic Site to learn more about Yuranigh, the Wiradjuri man from the Molong region, who guided explorer Thomas Mitchell in 1845 on his expedition to Central Queensland.

Kevin and I would like to thank Rosemary, not only for organising the field trip, but with Catherine very kindly providing us with transport to and from Killonbutta, including a wonderful trip back to Orange via the Scenic Drive. We learnt so much from them and the other members of Orange Field Naturalists, not just about Killonbutta, but about the region.

A group of Grey-crowned Babblers, a vulnerable species, flew along the edge of the forest at the first stop. Other birds noted during the day were Rufous Whistlers, Eastern Rosellas, Black-faced Cuckooshrikes, Weebills, Grey Fantails, a Pied Butcherbird, Apostlebirds and White-plumed Honeyeaters.

At the western stop Bruce spotted an Eastern Yellow Robin and a Grey Shrikethrush and White-throated Treecreeper were heard. Two Dusky Woodswallows (another vulnerable species) and two Jacky Winters were on the fence-line here. A Willie Wagtail, the Choughs and an Australian Magpie were also along the western road. This list has been entered onto Birdata.

Hai returned to Killonbutta a week later and at our first stop found that the two tall spider orchid buds had opened and were *Caladenia atrovespa*. The shorter spikes had not opened.

OFNCS Committee News

Friday 1 November is the date for the 50th Anniversary dinner.

You will have received an invitation and if you are in Orange that night please come along. **Jenny Pratten needs numbers and payment by Thursday October 17.** One copy of the book on the history of OFNCS will be provided to the principal current members. Additional copies or copies for non-members will be $25 plus postage if needed.

Welcome to new member Christine Jacobs.

Biodiversity Month Activities.

Orange Field Nats joined with the Central Tablelands Local Land Services (LLS), Orange City Council (OCC) and ECCO in several of the activities organised for Biodiversity Month.

The first spotlighting walk was at Hinton Reserve on October 6. Registrations were low however there was still lots to see. Nigel, in his OCC role, and Tim, from the LLS, guided participants around the reserve. They saw 11 Brush-tailed Possums, 2 micro bats and a Whistling Tree Frog that Aston spotted. Sadly, two cats and a fox were also seen.

Spotlighting the Whistling Tree Frog (insert) at Hinton Reserve. L to R: Linda, Tim (LLS), Kylie, Aston and Trenton. Photo N Hobden.

The second spotlighting night was at the Botanic Gardens and this time about 25 people came including family groups with young children and a grandmother. Two groups walked around the paths with Mark, from LLS, leading one and Nigel the other. Helmut and

Rosemary followed behind. While 13 Brush-tailed Possums were spotted the highlight for the children were the yabbies at the walkway across the dam. We had been told to look for red eye shine and surprisingly that is what the eye-shine of the yabbies was as they darted around in the water. Two of the Brush-tailed Possums were carrying young on their backs. Three roosting birds were spotted, including a Peewee.

Backyard Biodiversity was the other session that Field Nats was involved in along with Nick, from ECCO, and Nigel, from OCC. This was the first activity in Biodiversity Month on September 1 at the Botanic Gardens. Seventeen people attended. After an Acknowledgement to Country by Rosemary, Nick and Nigel shared tips on how people could increase biodiversity in their backyard. This included planting native species, reducing the lawn area, adding bird baths and water features as well as things like bee hotels and even old tiles as hidey holes for lizards and geckos. In a walk around the gardens everyone saw and heard lots of biodiversity – the birds, butterflies, and flowering plants. The frogs in the ponds were making a racket. We watched a pair of Magpie-larks (Peewees) building their mud nest in a Silver Birch tree. Many people also went away with some plants for their gardens, kindly supplied by the LLS as was the morning tea.

Nigel and Nick talking about ways to improve backyard biodiversity and below the Magpie-lark in its nest. Photos Rosemary Stapleton.

November Talk and Excursion

Talk – Thursday 14 November – Reptiles of NSW. Speaker Dr Ross Sadlier - formerly Collections Manager of the Herpetology Department of the Australian Museum and now a Senior Fellow. Ross will focus on reptiles of western NSW, with reference to Mount Canobolas and conservation of the reptile fauna in general.

Excursion – Sunday 17 November – Mt Canobolas SCA which will include a celebratory picnic lunch. Further details in the November Newsletter.

Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas Update

In his annual monitoring of C*aladenia fitzgeraldii* Col found that one of the buds had opened in the second week of September, which was earlier than usual.

On September 13 Hai had found some flowers of *Pterostylis nutans* (Hai's photo) on the Fern Gully Trail. Col also saw a small group of these greenhood flowers on the Indigo Trail all facing the same way. He went back the next day to photograph them, but some had been predated.

While the sad downward trill of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo is often heard on the mountain Hai managed the photo below at Orange View on September 13.

Peregrine News from Cilla Kinross.

The peregrine family, Diamond and Xavier, nesting in the tower at CSU, have three eggs that were due to hatch during the first week in October (and two have hatched). Incubation

usually lasts 34 to 36 days, so the first hatch was expected on Tuesday 1st. The male is doing a lot of incubation, sometimes as long as three hours at a time, allowing the female to hunt for her own prey, but he is also bringing in prey on most days. His contribution to the larder will increase when there are nestlings.

Interestingly they have resumed hunting at night, which they also did between February and April earlier this year. Although it is known that peregrines sometimes hunt at night in well-lit cities, it was not known that they could hunt in the countryside with little to no ambient night. I can only identify species that are brought into the box, but three have been ducklings, quails, a masked lapwing and other non-passerines, some associated with water. One night, Xavier brought in a small passerine (still alive) that looked rather like a fairy martin. What that was doing out and about at 4 am is anyone's guess....migrating?

Night-time peregrine snack – possibly a fairy martin (still alive, poor wee mite!). Image from CSU Webcam.

Burrendong Garden and Arboretum

The 167-hectare Burrendong Botanic Garden and Arboretum were founded by George Althofer and his brother Peter and were opened in 1964. A large crowd gathered at the gardens on Sunday 22 September to celebrate the 60th anniversary of their opening. A number of people, including family members, spoke of the history and value of the arboretum and many recognised the need for an injection of funds. Jane Paul spoke of the importance of native plants for the birds. Jane has kindly agreed for her talk to be included in the newsletter. The formalities concluded with Rod Althofer, with the support of his sister, Audrey, reading the poem 'The Road to Burrandong'. The book '*The Road to Burrandong and Other Verses*' by George was published by the Wellington Times in 1936. You can read the poem here.

A small part of the crowd at the 60th anniversary celebrations. Photo R Stapleton.

BURRENDONG ARBORETUM
60-year Anniversary Talk by Jane Paul.

'We Can Save the Plants, but Can We Save the Birds

Thank you very kindly for inviting me to say a few words at Burrendong Arboretum's 60th anniversary celebrations. You will have heard from others much interesting and detailed information about the history and progress of the Arboretum since its inception in 1964, demonstrating how we can save plants at risk, either for their rarity, or their vulnerable or endangered status. Another inhabitant of this botanic garden could be equally at risk especially with the continuing rate of deforestation in our state, it is the birds.

As so much habitat is cleared I wondered 'can we save the birds - how can we save the birds?'

We can help in addressing the imbalance caused by habitat loss by planting a native garden and what better way to look for inspiration than through John & Alice Newton's 'Wildflower Gems', to create an ideal garden of diversity with varied heights of upper, mid and lower layers.

Birds need a different suite of requisites to plants to enable them to survive, thrive and increase, a varied environment for their three basic needs – food, shelter and nest sites.

Food plants for nectar-lovers come from all manner of flowering shrubs including Grevillea pimeleoides and G. lanigera, Hakea sericea, Banksia spinulosa and Anigoxanthos manglesii; for the insectivorous provide mulch and leaf litter to encourage insects and small

animals, use for example Stypandra glauca, Veronica perfoliata and Hibbertia scandens. Seeds will be obtained from grasses including themeda, poa and danthonia, whilst also providing nesting material and shelter.

Shelter is so essential yet is the one most threatened by continuing land clearing. A small eucalyptus for example E. torquata, or a Grevillea robusta, Hakea laurina, Banksia integrifolia and Lophostemon confertus are all small trees or large shrubs that are wonderful shelters for roosting, perching and nesting, plus they provide protection from predators and the weather. A mid-storey of prickly Acacia paradoxa will deter every enemy of the bird that builds its nest therein as will a vine of Kennedia prostrata or Pandorea jasminoides. Thryptomene saxicola, Prostanthera ovalifolia and Astartea fasicularis near the birdbath will give safety to small birds drinking and bathing, or foraging. Acacia spectabilis is another stunning shrub or small tree, as is Leptospermum sericeum.

Nest sites are at a premium in many of our degraded landscapes. For example, there can be a paucity of hollows for a swathe of birds: parrots, wood duck, treecreepers, kookaburra, kingfishers and owls all use hollows, and there will be a lack of twigs and sticks for raptors and magpies where wheat and cotton are grown; bark fibre is similarly absent after deforestation. In the garden it is important to leave small branchlets and litter and to provide string and fibre such as an old mop hanging somewhere and soft material like cobwebs - don't knock down the spiders' homes around the house!

Water is essential for pigeons and doves but all birds need to drink, so locate birdbaths in the garden, close to shrubbery or other cover.

Landholders can help by retaining or creating vegetation corridors between monocultures of wheat, cotton, other crops, and by keeping all old dead trees, and logs and debris on the ground.

Of course, there are many other plants that are suitable for your native garden, these are just some to whet your appetite as you can see such beautiful pictures of them right here.

I am filled with praise and gratitude to the Friends and I feel sure you are all avowed to join the group today and volunteer tomorrow.'

Following the formalities people gathered for morning tea and many purchased plants before exploring the gardens. Cilla, Catherine, Doug, and I took a picnic lunch to Harris Lookout where the honeyeaters were feasting on the flowering grevilleas and hakeas.

On the way to the lookout, we noticed the *Swainsona recta* flowering in the fenced enclosure and Catherine also spotted a Hooded Robin in the Callitris. Two goannas were checking out the trees and one was not appreciated by the Dusky Woodswallows that may well have been nesting. It was a day for bumping into members of Field Nats with Bonny being there with a friend and several members of Dubbo Field Nats.

Hooded Robin. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Dates for your Diary

The Orange Picnic for Nature is on **Sunday 20 October, 12 – 3pm** at Gosling Creek Reserve. BYO food and drink and something to sit on. Enjoy the time in nature with friends, family, and the local community. Listen to live music, hear about what is being done in our community to promote natural biodiversity, participate in children's activities and enjoy the natural beauty of one of Orange's many green spaces.

Visit to Orange by Dubbo Field Naturalist and Conservation Society, Sunday 20 October. As a follow-up to Col Bower's talk to DFNS he will lead them to several orchid spots around Orange including the SCA.

Register for BirdLife Australia's **Aussie Bird Count** which is being held from **14-20 October**. You can do a 20-minute survey of birds anywhere, in your backyard, local park or somewhere in the bush or a reserve.

If you'd prefer frogs, then **Frog ID Week** is from **8-17 November**. This is run by the Australian Museum and uses the FrogID app.

Cowra Woodland Bird Surveys – the dates for 2025 are the weekends of 8-9 February, 12–13 April, 26–27 July and 18–19 October. All survey weekends start with a briefing and get together on the Friday night. Contact **Jayden Gunn** for more information or to register for the surveying at jayden.gunn@birdlife.org.au

Sightings around Orange

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

Things with Wings

Cilla spotted this **Scarlet Robin** (below) in North Mullion State Forest on September 19.

Brain Williams, near Vittoria has a pair of **Shining Bronze Cuckoos** (below) around the house. Brain commented they '*have been totally ravenous for red harlequin bugs. Didn't think anything would eat those. I witnessed one giving a bug to another yesterday*.'

Some unusual birds were seen at the end of September just to the west of Canowindra by Jenny Nicholls, long time surveyor at Cowra Woodland Bird Program. Jenny has seen **Plum-headed Finches**, including 10 on power lines just near Canowindra Tip on Nangar Road. At a farm dam and wetland about 700m along Fish Fossil Drive she saw and photographed a pair of **Australian Spotted Crakes** (below). Other good birds were **Little Grassbirds, Golden-headed Cisticola,** and **Black-fronted Dotterel**.

Bats in Backyards is a Saving our Species citizen science program which people could join to survey insect-eating bats on their property. They received a bat detector device to record echolocation calls over 3 to 5 days. Calls were analysed on return of the device.

Brian Willams joined the program. He has been sent the list of bats detected at his place at Vittoria. Brian was '*happy to see that we have 13 species of micros in our grassy woodlands with three vulnerables'.* They are the species in bold.

Large Bent-winged Bat	*Miniopterus orianae*
Yellow-bellied Sheath-tailed Bat	*Saccolaimus flaviventris*
Little Pied Bat (Probable)	*Chalinolobus picatus*
Little Forest Bat	*Vespadelus vulturnus*
Large Forest Bat (Possible)	*Vespadelus darlingtoni*
Southern Forest Bat (Probable)	*Vespadelus regulus*
Gould's Wattled Bat	*Chalinolobus gouldii*
White-striped Free-tailed Bat	*Austronomus australis*
Chocolate Wattled Bat	*Chalinolobus morio*
Inland Broad-nosed Bat	*Scotorepens balstoni*
Southern Free-tailed Bat	*Ozimops planiceps*
Long-eared Bat species	*Nyctophilus sp.*
Little Broad-nosed Bat / Parnaby's Broad-nosed Bat	*Scotorepens greyii / Scotorepens sp.*

Other Creatures

Peter West reports a probable **Greater Glider** found dead after being snagged in the top barbs of a fence at Clifton Grove. The body was retrieved, frozen and Peter has organised for it to be taken to the Australian Museum for confirmation of the identification. Peter had

had a report of a sighting of a Greater Glider about 1-2km away earlier in the year. This suggests there is a disjunct population of this threatened species in the Mullion Ranges.

Plants

On September 19 Cilla photographed this recovery of ***Acacia meiantha***, presumably from suckers, after a die back event. It was in North Mullion State Forest.

I'm not sure if there is a word for an orchid 'twitch' but Swee Chuak did that on her last weekend in Orange. As she won't be returning here for work Swee, along with Hai, visited Cookamidgera NR, the Bumberry section of Goobang NP, Conimbla NP and Cargo Quarry on the first weekend of September searching for orchids. They managed to catch the late winter species such as **Inland Mosquito Orchids (*Acianthus collinus*), Slaty Hemet Orchid (*Corybas incurvus*)** and **Dwarf Greenhood (*Diplodium nanum*)** as well as the early spring flowers such **Caladenias, Diuris** and **Midget Greenhoods**. They also found ***Bunochilus stenosepalus*, the Leafy Greenhood** in Conimbla. Nigel also did a trip to Conimbla that weekend and found similar species.

A cluster of Diuris at Cargo Quarry. Photo Swee Chuak.

Since then, Nigel has been orchid hunting in the Mullion Ranges on September 22. He said *'Plenty of Diuris and today also saw the most number of* ***Brown Beaks (Lyperanthus suaveolens)*** *that I've come across. Not many Caladenia spiders out but did find some;* ***Caladenia clavigera*** *is the orchid with the pale sepals.'*

Brown Beaks (Lyperanthus suaveolens) (left) and Caladenia clavigera (right). Photos Nigel Hobden.

At the Bumberry site, adjacent to Goobang NP there were lots of the common springtime orchids. Several of the ***Pterostylis plumosa*** flowers had come out as well as the ***Caladenia atrovespa*.**

The day after Col Bower's orchid talk to Dubbo Field Nats, Nella Smith (Murrumbidgee Field Nats) and Rosemary joined a walk in Beni SCA and an adjacent bush block. Our excellent guide was Rob Quinan. Again, similar species were flowering with a nice group of Beard orchids in the SCA.

Eyes down looking for orchids on Luke's block adjacent to Beni SCA. Photo Elsie Howe.

While Col investigated some different *Wahlenbergia* we visited an urban park on Palmer Street, Dubbo. DFNCS had asked the council not to mow the large open paddock adjacent to an oval and play area. The paddock, of about three hectares had thousands of ***Diuris tricolor*** flowering. An amazing sight, especially in an urban area.

Diuris tricolor at Palmer St, Dubbo. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Creature of the Month

Australian Painted Lady, *Vanessa kershawi*

Report and photos by Rosemary Stapleton.

What is an Australian Painted Lady or *Vanessa kershawi*? Maybe a stage persona with lots of makeup? It is actually a species of butterfly that is one of the first migrants to arrive in spring. I saw one at The Walls in the SCA on August 27 and it seemed too small to be a Common Brown butterfly that are there during the summer. The Australian Painted Lady can migrate in large numbers in spring, moving in a south to south-westerly direction through southern Australia for up to eight weeks. There is a smaller return flight in late summer and early autumn with adults flying northwards.

The wingspan of the male is 43mm and the female 47mm. The Australian Painted Lady Butterfly has pale brown underwings and a delicate pattern of orange and brown on the upper wings, with tiny blue eyespots on the hind wings. The larvae are brown and spiky with a pale yellow stripe along each side. The caterpillars feed on native everlastings and other daisies, as well as the introduced Capeweed (*Arctotheca calendula*), Scotch Thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) and Lavender (*Lavendula officinalis*). These common butterflies are found in a wide variety of natural and modified habitats. *Vanessa kershawi* is one of three Vanessa species found in Australia. It has also spread to New Zealand but does not overwinter there.

An Australian Painted Lady feeding on a flowering Leucopogon shrub, The Walls. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

The Australian Museum Fact Sheet says '*adults fly rapidly and frequently settle, with wings partly outspread, on the ground to bask or on flowers to feed. During late afternoon males establish territories by perching on the ground in open sunlit areas. Several generations are completed annually. Adults regularly migrate, flying very fast, within about 2m of ground*.' The Fact Sheet also notes that *'In 1889, it was reported to migrate in such great numbers that they blackened the sky. Trains were unable to get traction because so many butterflies were resting on the tracks! Such mass migrations have not been reported for some time.'*

This Australian Painted Lady is probably a male as it was perching in the late afternoon sun on one of the gravel paths at the Botanic Gardens on September 1. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

References

https://australian.museum/learn/animals/insects/australian-painted-lady/

Braby, Michael F. (2005) The complete field guide to butterflies of Australia. CSIRO Publishing.

Left to right: Back row- Hai Wu, Marita Sydes, Patrick Driver, Rosemary Stapleton, Bruce Hansen, Catherine Stapleton, Glen Griffith.
Front row- Kevin and Alison Downing, Sandra Chrystall, Jane Paul, Peter Toedter.
Photo Helmut Berndt.

Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas from the Scenic Drive. Photo Alison Downing.

Another view of Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas from the Scenic Drive. Photo Alison Downing.

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Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, including the people of the Wiradjuri Nation, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society, PO Box 369, Orange, 2800
orangefieldnats@gmail.com www.orangefieldnats.com www.facebook.com/ofncs/