

ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2025

Next Meeting

Thursday 11 December, 7.30 pm.
Planning 2026 talks and excursions
There will be no guest speaker.

Committee Meeting 7.00 pm.

Face to face at Nguluway Ngurang
Seniors Village Hub, North Room
(Opposite side of carpark to Harris Farm)

Next Excursion

Sunday 14 December, 4 - 6pm.
Christmas Get Together with ECCO.
Borenore CWA Hall
corner Escort Way & Convent Lane.

Planning Meeting

Thursday 11 December, 7.30 pm.

This meeting will be to plan our talks and excursions for 2026. There will be no guest speaker.

If you have suggestions for 2026 either come along or email your ideas to orangefieldnats@gmail.com.

The Committee will be meeting at 7.00pm to finalise other business.

Christmas Get Together



As in past years we will be joining with ECCO to share Christmas cheer. Please bring along

some 'grub' to share, just like this merry Scarlet Robin. Bring along the drinks you prefer and your own drinking glasses. The hall has chairs, tables, crockery and cutlery.

We will be meeting at the Borenore CWA Hall from 4pm to 6pm. It is on the northern side of The Escort Way opposite the Public School. The hall has air conditioning, a kitchen and toilets.

Please Note – member and artist John Hansen has done a great job creating lovely Christmas cards from his Robin collection. One features this Scarlet Robin. They are available from the Orange Visitors Centre. Thanks John permitting use of your image.

Last Meeting - Thursday 13 November **Meet your local Forest Ranger.**

Speaker – Paul Robb, Forest Ranger, Forestry Corporation of NSW, Northern Softwoods.
Text by Rosemary Stapleton, photos from Paul Robb.

In his talk Paul gave us a glimpse into the varied roles he has in the 21 state forests in the Bathurst Management Area. This extends from the western edge of the Blue Mts escarpment to the extensive forests right on Orange's doorstep. Paul's role is community engagement and education. It was obvious that he loves his job as he was enthusiastic about protecting the forests from many different types of illegal activity. He talked about the serious parts of his job but also entertained us with stories and some images of illegal activity from camera traps.

The Forestry Corporation is a business whose aim is to grow and sell pines and make a profit for the NSW government as well as managing the forests for other forest users. The Corporation supplies 50% of the pine supply in NSW with the other 50% coming from private plantations. The funds are made when the pines

are harvested at 30 years of age but also when some are thinned out at 15 years. Replanting occurs in the year following harvest after waste had been piled up and burnt. Soil testing is done and if the soil is found to be deficient fertiliser is applied by helicopter.



A well managed pine plantation.

The size of the pine forest estate is increasing with the purchase of freehold land. The Bathurst Management Area is not suitable for hardwood timber production, although there are some hardwood forests in the north of the state. Grazing permits still exist in some forests, but this does not prevent the public from entering these forests.

Paul is part of the Fire and Stewardship Team whose key issues are weed and feral animal control, law enforcement, unregistered vehicles, illegal dumping, hunting and fire management. Within the Corporation there are also teams that manage logging, haulage, and replanting.

Paul's colleague Ruth organises efforts to control weeds. When asked Paul agreed that pine wildings were weeds when they spread into the native areas of the forests and adjoining properties. He maps this spread and TAFE students use wildlings for chainsaw training. He encouraged us to pull out any small pine wildings we see.

When visiting State Forests Paul emphasised the need for us to be aware of our safety and the suspicious activity of others. He recommended calling 000 if smoke is seen.

Hunters can use bows, firearms or pig dogs. One hunting permit is available per 400 ha of forest. The hunter's main targets are deer, pigs and goats. Last weekend 170 permits to hunt were issued in the Bathurst Management Area. It is now no longer possible for the public to

check where permits are issued. Paul recommended the best strategy was to let hunters know you are in the forest by blowing a whistle. That will scare the hunted animals, and the hunters will follow them. If multiple shots are heard this is target shooting which breaches any hunting permit. The other advice he gave was if you come across a hunter you can ask them to put their firearm or bow down on the ground if you feel unsafe.

Dumping of rubbish in forests is illegal. New amendments to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act give Forestry staff more authority and also allow them to impose larger fines. The main items of concern are mattresses, household appliances, asbestos, and mulch. Even tags on trees marking running or motorbike routes are litter. Paul related how he checks the rubbish and if there is anything to identify the owner of the rubbish, he follows up to fine the person. This has included address labels on packaging and from online supermarket shopping bags. If rubbish has been dumped in a creek the fine is \$15,000.



Dumped rubbish including shopping bags that can be traced back to the owner.

Paul encouraged us to report any illegal dumping to the [FCNSW website](https://www.fcns.gov.au/) or P: 6331 2044
E: bathurstadmin@fcns.gov.au

Bushfires also pose a threat to pine forests, and they will be given priority protection. Paul explained that there are new smoke detection cameras on fire towers which use AI to distinguish between smoke and dust. This allows a quick response. Between October and April there is a ban on solid fuel fires, however gas stoves are allowed. If permitted, campfires must be less than 1m² and 4.5m from the nearest log, stump, or tree. The ground around within two metres must be cleared of all flammable matter. At times Paul finds that

campers have left their campfires smouldering which have the potential to spread. When asked Paul said camping is permitted anywhere in a state forest providing there are no operations. And he said, 'don't camp under trees!'

Other things Paul monitors are beehives, dirt bikes, graffiti, vandalism, and fungi collectors. For beehives there is a permit system where there is a limit of 200 hives/site. The hives must be identified as well as being placed off any road or trail.



Beehives placed illegally on a road.

Occasionally Paul participates in fauna monitoring such as for Booroolong Frogs in Essington SF. When chatting after his talk it was obvious that Paul watches the forest wildlife, especially birds, and has come to know them well.



A Booroolong Frog.

Paul's favourite forests are the western side of Jenolan, Gurnang, Bosche's Creek and areas in the Mullions Range, Turon and Pennsylvania SFs. These could be potential OFNCS excursion sites in 2026.

Thankyou Paul for sharing your experiences and educating us about the forests. Maybe you can join us on one of our excursions and you can share more of your stories with members.



Hampton Forest is a forest to enjoy.

Last Excursion - Saturday 15 November.

Unfortunately, the Picnic for Nature was cancelled due to the threat of afternoon storms.

OFNCS Committee News

Another submission was made on a proposed extension of a coal mine. This time for the Ulan Coal Mine. Bruce Hansen and Rosemary Stapleton participated in another round of consultation for the development of Orange Council's Open Space and Recreation Strategy. We emphasised the importance of natural open spaces for biodiversity as well as for people's enjoyment of nature.

February 2026 Activities

Thursday 12 February – Committee meeting and Annual General Meeting.

Sunday 15 February – excursion details to be decided at the December meeting.

Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas Update

More details of the proposed wind farms in Canobolas State Forest (and Mullions Range SF) have been released by Iberdrola. Twenty-one turbines are proposed for the area south of the SCA, following the ridge lines.

Community information sessions have been held in Nashdale and Mullion Creek. Emily Brebner, Iberdrola's Development Manager – NSW Development, spoke at the ECCO meeting on November 26. With the proposed turbines being 250m in height there were lots of questions about the location of the turbines and transport of them to the sites. Concerns were also raised over the visual impact of these from the SCA, damage to areas of native forest, wildlife and the potential impact on weather and water.

Audio and visual monitoring stations have been established, as have wind speed monitors. Ecologists have been undertaking surveys every quarter and these will continue for at least the next 12 months. Emily suggested interested people would be able to take part in the environmental assessments. This is an opportunity to bring local knowledge to the assessments. (When asked Emily said they were very aware of the *Acacia meiantha* population in the Mullions Range SF.)

It has been suggested that OFNCS should invite the ecologists to speak at one of our 2026 meetings.

If you wish to know more about the proposals, there is an Iberdrola Drop-in Centre at 119 Byng St. It is open on Tuesdays from 9am to 1pm and Thursdays 1pm to 5pm. Emily can also be contacted by email at emily.brebner@iberdrola.com.au.



Looking south from the Northern Boundary Fire Trail towards Bald Hill, an area where wind turbines may be built. Photo R Stapleton.

CWEC Meeting **2 November 2025**

Report by Rosemary Stapleton.

centralwest
environment
council

This was a face-to-face meeting in Rylstone and Nigel Hobden represented OFNCS. People from nine other groups were there as well as observers from Rylstone and District Environment Society (RDES).

All groups gave reports. Main points of interest taken from the minutes are:

Nature:

- Annual Glossy Black count in Goonoo SCA reported good numbers.
- A new population of Copper Butterfly has been found in the Lithgow area.

- For OFNCS Nigel talked about Biodiversity Month activities and involvement in orchid work at Roseberg SF, the Barton NR excursion and Koala monitoring by LLS in North Orange using song meters and recordings.
- Rylstone are continuing on-ground projects on the Cudgegong Riverbanks and at Rylstone Common.

Mining:

- Local coal mining and extensions are an ongoing issue for Mudgee and Lithgow Environment Groups (EG). In Mudgee there is significant concern that companies are applying for modifications of existing mines. These do not go to an independent decision maker but are approved internally by Department of Planning staff. This is despite some modification projects being outside the footprint of the existing mine approval. In Lithgow the Springvale and Clarence mines are working on extensions.
- The Bowdens Lead Mine proposal is to go back to the Independent Planning Commission. The campaign against the mine has recently involved two days lobbying at Parliament House and a focus on a Broken Hill report on lead exposure.
- Blayney EcoHub and Belubula Headwaters Protection Alliance are involved in ongoing Cadia Goldmine campaigns. There is a new McPhillamy's mine proposal for treatment of tailings to reduce water content and the required storage area, however the water supply has not been solved.
- Dubbo EG visited the Tomingley Gold Mine biodiversity offsets and were underwhelmed.

Renewable energy:

- Construction of projects has started in CW Renewable Energy Zone.
- Many projects have vocal NIMBY opposition.
- There was discussion about the political campaigns being run against renewable energy projects getting a lot of media coverage – more so than the campaigns against coal mining, that has a much larger environmental and social impact.

Waste to energy:

- A project is still lurking at Lithgow.
- Rylstone has concerns about the emissions and health impacts of a Bio Methanol project at the old Kandos cement works using Sydney waste stream to produce shipping fuel.

The reform of the Federal Environmental Laws was also discussed with the key ask from the environment movement being the inclusion of a climate trigger.

Peregrine News from the nest-box – and a request for help.

Text and photo from Cilla Kinross on 24/11/25.

Our new male has settled in very well. Whilst we all miss Xavier, who ‘saved’ the season in 2016 by step-fathering Bula’s three nestlings, this young chap has ticked all the boxes in respect of courtship, mating and prey provision. We ended up with eggs, with just one hatched....probably a good thing considering Gimbir’s lack of experience – he’s only a year old.

The name ‘Gimbir’ came about by accident. I thought it meant ‘spring’ in Wiradjuri and as he arrived right at the start of spring, it seems appropriate. However, it actually means ‘spring’ or ‘fountain’ (of water!). By this time, we had already decided we liked the name!

The youngster (now 19 days old) is called Girri (= red), the theme this year being colours, and is doing very well. I suspect a female (huge feet) but am waiting until he or she can stand properly. If they become larger than Gimbir, we’ll know for sure.



Girri at two weeks old nipping Gimbir’s tail.

I have a request. This season is running a month late, so the fledge date is likely to be mid-December and unknowingly I had booked

two nights away in the Blue Mountains with my daughter and grand-daughter who are visiting from the states, arriving on the 15th. I’m never normally away at fledging time, so need someone to help out while I’m away, just making sure the youngster hasn’t come to grief. Let me know if you have any time available, 15th to 17th December and I can make up a roster.

Please email Cilla at CKinross@csu.edu.au.

Superb Parrot Monitoring November 2025.

Text and photos from Nigel Hobden.

On Tuesday 25 November a team of researchers from Australian National University, Canberra, visited Orange to undertake annual monitoring of Superb Parrots at Bloomfield Park. Nigel, keen as to learn more about our Superb Parrots, took the opportunity to meet the team and observe the capture of adult birds.

The team lead by Daniel firstly observed trees for potential nesting hollows, then waited patiently for parent birds to fly in to feed chicks. The waiting period could be up to 3 hours! Once nesting sites were confirmed, climbing ropes were established using slingshots.



Investigating a hollow used by Superb Parrots.

The team checked out previously known hollows and unfortunately, one hollow had been raided and taken over by Rainbow Lorikeets who had killed the female Superb Parrot. This is an unfortunate consequence of the ability of some native species to adapt and spread beyond their identified home range, often because of human intervention.

The number of nest sites this year was down considerably on previous years. Strange, when

colleagues at Council had taken photos of nearly one hundred Superb Parrots feeding at Total Park on Bathurst Road (below) around the 17 November. Daniel assumed there was a significant percentage of the population that was non-breeding.



This year the team were looking to gain information on feeding grounds that the adult birds used and development rates of chicks. The closer and better the feeding ground it is presumed the more rapid would be the development of the chicks.

To enable this research one adult bird from a nest was captured, weighed, wings measured, blood sample taken and then a radio tracking device was installed. Due to the short duration of the research period radio tracking devices were installed using tape. The back feathers were carefully parted, and tape was stuck to the feathers and then the tiny radio tracking device secured to the tape harness using cable ties. Each bird's weight was checked to see that it would be able to manage carrying the radio tracking device.



Superb Parrot with tracking device attached.

Once the back feathers of the bird were shed so too would be the radio tracking device. The birds would normally lose their back feathers within a period around 4 to 6 weeks.

The tracking will enable researchers to see where birds fly to for feeding, whether it be multiple sites or just a couple; observe the number of return trips each day and then gauge the development of chicks.

Dates for your Diary

2026 Cowra Survey Dates: 13 – 15 February, 10 – 12 April, 24 – 26 July, 14 – 18 October.

Note that surveyors are asked to be at a get together on the Friday night to meet their survey team and get site instructions and maps.

Sightings around Orange

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

Birds

Australian White Ibis moved into the clumps of reeds at Ploughmans Wetland in mid-September with up to 40 being counted. Some established nests and in mid-November the number had reduced to about 20. Some chicks have hatched, and their pin feathers are growing and they will fledge soon.

Three Ibis chicks begging. Photo R Stapleton.



On 5/11 Alison was bombed by a plover (**Masked Lapwing**) between IGA and the bike shop on Summer St. She thought '*being by a car park was not the ideal place to nest.*'

On 14/11 it was good to see a **Lathams Snipe** at Ploughmans Wetland. **White-winged Trillers** are still around with one seen at Ploughmans Wetland on 23/11.

On 19/11 five tiny black fuzzy **Dusky Moorhen** chicks were being fed by three adults in Cumbungi in the southern pond at Ploughmans Wetland. A good example of cooperative breeding! Sadly a few days later, on 24/11, the area was illegally burnt. Fortunately, the fire did not spread to the

northern wetland and not many of the planted trees and shrubs were burnt.



Four of the five Moorhen chicks and below what remained of the habitat after the fire. Maybe they didn't survive. Photos R Stapleton.



Other animals

Nigel reported that about 100 **Grey-headed Flying Foxes** returned to the Ploughmans Lane roost on 3/11. He noted some are mums with their pups.

Platypus were seen in Summer Hill Creek by Cilla in the last week of October. This contradicts a recent platypus eDNA report on Summerhill Creek claiming no platypus were present.

While at Barton NR on 12/10 Catherine recorded the frog call that was heard just as we started the walk. Frog ID said it was the **Eastern Banjo Frog**, [*Limnodynastes dumerilii*](#).

Dick recorded what sounded like a 'barking' frog at his home at Nashdale. Frog ID identified it as the **Smooth Toadlet**, [*Uperoleia laevis*](#). And Dick said, 'surprise of surprises I also recorded the **Common Eastern Froglet**!!'

Helmut passed on a link from Australian Geographic about research into how [Velvet](#)

[Worm slime might help develop a new bioplastic](#). An endemic **Velvet Worm** lives on Gaanha bula Mt Canobolas.

Fungi

Jenny Medd spotted this "**dog vomit fungus**", *Fuligo septica* (below) in her garden at Nashdale. A day later it looked like gingerbread sourdough! It is a common slime mould that was growing on garden mulch. Jenny commented that it was the brightest yellow she had seen. It is unusual to have fungi appear when it is so dry.



Plants

As predicted, there was an orchid twitch to Wambool Nature Reserve on the weekend of 8/9 November. Nigel went on Friday and found some **Small Duck Orchids**, *Caleana minor*. Catherine and Rosemary went the next day and also found them. They are not just small but minute! None of us found the Large Duck Orchid that Hai had found the weekend before.



A Small Duck Orchid, *Caleana minor*.
Photo Nigel Hobden.

Then on Sunday Marita, Patrick and Hai not only found both Duck Orchids but also a **Red Rusty**, *Oligochaetochilus rufus*, a **Short-lipped Leek Orchid**, *Paraprassophyllum brevialbre*, and a Sun Orchid. Hai also found

a cluster of about 50 of the **Black Tongue Caladenia**, *Caladenia congesta*.



Short-lipped Leek Orchid. Photo Marita Sydes.

Col Bower said, 'Wambool is such a great location for orchids! It is the most reliable place I know of for finding *Caleana minor*.'

Marita also found the Small Duck Orchid at Munghorn Gap, near Mudgee, the following weekend.



Flannel Flower. Photo Hai Wu.

On 22/11 Hai saw a few **Flannel Flowers**, *Actinotus helianthi*, on the walking trail on the eastern side of Boshes Creek Flora Reserve. He also saw a few pink Boronia, possibly the Small-leaved Boronia, near where we stopped

for lunch on the September excursion. Flannel flowers were also seen by Catherine and Rosemary at Bumbery in Goobang NP, while doing a Glossy Black Cockatoo survey.

Insects

Butterflies were seen at Wambool NR including a Fringed Heath Blue, *Neolucia agricola*. Hai saw butterflies on his walk at Boshes Creek. They were a male and female Common Brown, a Meadow Argus, an Orange Ochre, *Trapezites eliena* and the Ringed xenia, *Geitoneura acantha* (below).



A dead Christmas Beetle, a **Hairy Spotted Beetle** – *Anoplognathus velutinus* (below) was found on the path at Ploughmans Wetland on 14/11 by Rosemary.



Creature of the Month:

Kangaroo Grass, *Themeda triandra*, is brought to you by Alison Downing and friends from the Downing Herbarium at Macquarie University. See attached.

To join please pay by **EFT to:** BSB 802 129 Account 100014678 OFN & Cons Soc Inc
Please identify payments with your name and send confirmation of the payment to orangefieldnats@gmail.com. You can pay by cash at a meeting or at Orange Credit Union.

Subscription rates:

Single member – \$25

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Each additional family member – \$5

Concession rate (printed newsletters) – \$25

Note: concession rate is for *bona fide* pensioners and students only

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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.

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