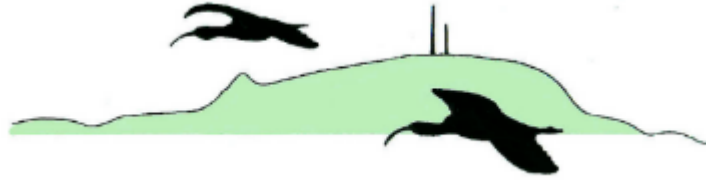


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

Next Talk

Thursday 9 April – 7.30pm

Cave Exploration in the east Kimberley region of WA.

Speaker: Denis Marsh

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

Committee Meeting, 6.30pm

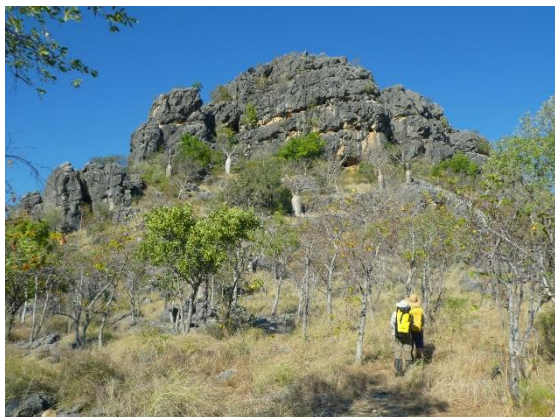
Next Excursion

**Sunday 12 April, 9.00 am
Mullion Range SCA**

**Next Talk – Thursday 9 April, 7.30 pm
Cave Exploration in the east Kimberley region of Western Australia.**

Speaker: Denis Marsh

In June/July 2025 Denis joined a group of cavers from around NSW, exploring a remote area of the east Kimberley region of WA looking for previously unknown and unexplored caves. The talk will cover what was discovered over the three-week expedition.



Cavers, Marilyn Scott and Bob Kershaw approaching part of the Ningbing Range in search of caves. Photo Denis Marsh.

Changed Location for April Excursion

Where: The Falls and Central Mines Trail, Mullion Range SCA.

When: Sunday 12 April

Time: 9.00 am

Leader: Marita Sydes

Grade: 3, moderate

Meeting place: Orange High School Bus Bay

Due to the issues occurring with fuel the committee has decided not to visit the reserves at Dubbo with Dubbo Field Nats.

Instead, we will do a half day excursion to the Mullion Range SCA, which many people will have visited. The excursion will be along The Falls track to view the waterfall and then on the Central Mines Trail to Summer Hill Creek. We will also walk off track to look for autumn flowering orchids, fungi and bryophytes that may have responded to the recent rain. It will be interesting to compare the eastern side of the track, where a control burn occurred a few years ago, with the unburnt western part of the reserve.



The entrance to The Falls track.

Photo R Stapleton.

The main vegetation communities in the Mullion Range SCA are Inland Scribbly Gum *Eucalyptus rossii* and Red Stringybark *E. macrorhyncha* Woodland, Red Stringybark and Bundy *E. goniocalyx* Woodland and River Oak

Casuarina cunninghamiana Riparian Communities along Summer Hill Creek.

After returning to the vehicles those wishing to have lunch can drive another 5 kms to the Fourth Crossing Picnic Area. The SCA was once an important gold mining area. At the picnic area there is evidence of a water race constructed by miners during the gold rush to transfer water from the creek to mining areas. It is now a rough walking track. The picnic area has a toilet and picnic tables.



The Falls. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

The SCA is approximately 20 km from Orange along Ophir Road.

Meet at the bus bay at 9am sharp to carpool. Bring morning tea, water, and any essential medications you may need. You can also bring lunch if you wish to go on to the Fourth Crossing Picnic Area. Please wear closed walking shoes and clothing suitable for the weather.

Last Meeting: Thursday 12 March.
Tracking Superb Parrots

Speaker: Dr Laura Bussolini, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Difficult Bird Unit, Fenner School of Environment & Society, ANU.
Report by Tony Caine, images from Laura Bussolini.

Laura presented early findings from a national project on Superb Parrots and other threatened parrots. The research was funded through a Renewables Environmental Research Initiative. One consideration of wind farms is what birds would be impacted!

The project examines how development may impact five parrot species, focusing on gaps in ecological knowledge—especially movement patterns and habitat use. The five species are the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot and Swift Parrot as well as the Superb Parrot, Regent Parrot, Blue-winged Parrot that are all listed as vulnerable.

Superb Parrots inhabit central and southern NSW across varied landscapes including woodlands, farmland, and urban areas. Key threats include habitat loss, competition for tree hollows, and climate change. Current population estimates (~20,000) are uncertain due to seasonal movement.



A female and a colourful male Superb Parrot.

Fieldwork (Aug–Dec) involved large-scale data collection: GPS tagging, nest monitoring, chick measurements, and genetic sampling. Sampling locations included Bloomfield and around Orange, Canberra, the Murrumbidgee from Wagga to west of Darlington Point and further southwest on the Murray. Early GPS results show strong individual variation. During breeding, birds stay close to nests (often within 10–12 km), but post-breeding movements can extend over 100 km, with some birds travelling widely or revisiting locations.



A head for heights is needed to get to Superb Parrots nest hollows.

Preliminary analysis suggests differences in range size by region and behaviour shifts between breeding and non-breeding periods. Overall mean flight height of tracked Superbs was 29 m with an average flight speed of 40 km/hour. Flight speeds can exceed 80 km/hour, and birds tend to fly higher during breeding. Genetic work with samples taken from chicks (ongoing) may indicate a single large population.



Superb Parrot chicks about to be returned to the nest following measuring and sampling.

Overall, the study highlights major knowledge gaps and the need for multi-year data. Future work will examine habitat use, regional differences, and links between movement and breeding success to better inform conservation strategies. The project will also look at the threats to the species and investigate if the threats act collectively or independently.

When asked Laura commented that Superbs are not known to use artificial nest boxes, with 1 or 2 examples known. (One of which was by the Huxtable family at a nest box in Bloomfield). Cilla asked about the impact of climate change and Laura replied that there had been an altitude and range shift of the species probably due to climate change. Previously they had been recorded at 700m and now they are being recorded at locations at 900m. When asked about Cowra Laura said the team hopes to spend time there in future.

At the end of Laura's talk Nigel thanked her and said he is looking forward to her return to Orange for the breeding season in November.

If you wish to watch Laura's talk it is at the post - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ou_0iCVu1Ww

Last Excursion: Sunday 15 March.
Hassans Walls, led by Nigel Hobden.
Report by Nigel Hobden.

With the earlier start we had four members and all jumped into the one car. It was a great chat as we drove to Lithgow. Pit stopping at the Lithgow Lantern Visitor Information Centre before heading up to Hassans Walls. We discovered that the people of Lithgow are very fortunate to have Hassans Walls Reserve at their doorstep. As we drove up Hassans Walls Road we passed many people hiking or walking their dogs along the road.

We parked in the car park area near the main Hassans Walls Lookout, a fully accessible lookout with a fibreglass reinforced plastic mesh boardwalk leading to expansive views of the Great Dividing Range looking out to Mt Wilson, Mt Banks, Mount York, Mount Tarana, and Mount Blaxland with the Hartley Valley below.

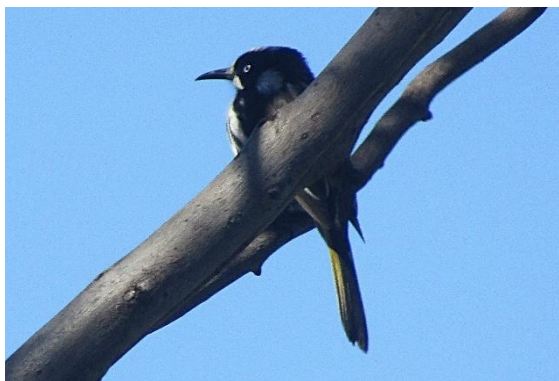


The walkway at Hassans Wall. Photo M Sydes.

With the current closure of the Great Western Highway the road below, through Hartley Valley, was very quiet. Only a few cars travelling along the road. After soaking in the views, we headed along a rough bush track to other viewpoints. Along the way we spotted a couple of Parsons Bands orchids (*Eriochilus cucullatus*). At the Hole in the Wall viewpoint Hai spotted a large skink hiding in a rock fissure and we stopped to take photos.

Finnegans Track follows a ridgeline, and we passed pagoda rock formations transitioning from a timbered landscape into a health landscape dominated by *Banksia spinulosa* and *B. cunninghamii* and back into a treed canopy. Few birds were out but we did manage to see a pair of New Holland Honeyeaters, Yellow-tailed black Cockatoos, Grey Fantail, White-

browed Scrubwren and Crimson Rosella. Five or six other species were heard.



New Holland Honeyeater. Photo Hai Wu.

We spotted dragonflies in the heath area, which Pat talked to us about as he had completed his PhD on dragonflies.



Australian Emerald Dragonfly, Hemicordulia australiae. Photo Pat Driver.



Black Rock Skink (Egernia saxatilis) in a hole at the Hole in The Wall. Photo Nigel Hobden.

At the end of the track, we were once again taken in by the vision splendour overlooking the Hartley Valley to the Blue Mountains. At this location, the rock formations were quite

unusual sandstone laid down in curves – like giant ripples. We saw many vertical fissures in the rocks and Marita questioned if it was due to mining activity or just a natural occurrence.



The curves of sandstone. Photo Nigel Hobden.

Following our track back, we took a side shoot to another lookout then walked back to the car. We drove to Bracey Lookout for a lunch stop and to take in the views to the north over Lithgow. After lunch we drove to the start of the Pottery Track – a mountain bike trail, where we explored and found many *Pterostylis* orchids of the Tiny Greenhood clan. Possibly *P. crebra* and *P. rubescens*. We saw a few very small Jacky Dragons often on the track basking in the sunlight.



Pterostylis crebra orchids on the Pottery Track. Photo Nigel Hobden.

Other biodiversity of note seen during the day were fungi and a Legless Lizard. Not many plants were flowering although Marita captured the brilliant blue of the Tufted Blue Lily, *Thelionema caespitosum* (below).



OFNCS Committee News

We welcome new member Emilie Ens-Hawke.

The online talk in March was appreciated by those who couldn't attend, and good numbers were also at the Hub. Murray Fletcher, who had just done a quick trip to Perth, was able to watch it from where he was staying in Tasmania! Despite the initial hiccups the online option will be used for other talks later in the year.

Before the talk Tony and several committee members tossed around ideas on how to make the Field Nats website more up-to-date and active. Some will take time so keep checking in every month or so.

May OFNCS Activities

Thursday 14 May Talk.

Orchid Taxonomy: a gentle introduction.

Speaker – Heidi Zimmer

Sunday 17 May Excursion.

Roseberg State Forest (SF) and a control burn area in Neville SF.

NOTE: These areas are south of Blayney and Carcoar. If fuel problems persist the excursion may be changed to a more local reserve.

Vale Jenny Medd

Text and photo by Rosemary Stapleton.

Sadly, Jenny passed away on 29 January. On 16 March family and friends gathered to celebrate her life. As Jenny had been very involved with the Society the family asked me to reflect on her

many years of involvement with Orange Field Nats at the gathering.

Dear Jenny, was a much-valued friend and member of Orange Field Nats since at least 1983. Many of us met Jenny at a monthly talk or excursion. She was always welcoming of new members and happy to share her knowledge and love of nature with others. We remember her as a very competent local botanist in her own right with much of her knowledge acquired through her explorations with Dick.

She had a passion for plants and local threatened or endemic species. Jenny loved orchids but also fungi, insects, lichen, mosses, hornworts, and other small things. Jenny was a 'formidable spotter' with an 'eagle eye' when in the bush. She often spotted orchids that others had missed, including Dick! Superb Fairy-wrens were one of her favourite birds.

This skill was in evidence on orchid and bryophyte surveys on the mountain following the 2018 fire. On these surveys Jenny also generously shared her home-made biscuits, slices, and cakes. They were quickly eaten by the scientists, and the recipes were often asked for.



Jenny, with Dick, looking at lichen on an outcrop along Gum Ridge, Mt Canobolas SCA.

Jenny was an environmentalist and nature lover who advocated strongly for the protection of natural areas like the Mt Canobolas State Conservation Area and other reserves. She often raised issues of environmental concern with government.

For her the mountain was a special place, and she went into bat for protecting it when the mountain bike track was proposed. She was a committee member of the Canobolas Conservation Alliance and asked councillors and politicians' difficult questions about the proposal.

Jenny played a significant role behind the scenes in Orange Field Nats. Jennifer Kenna, a past president, remembers that Jenny was always quietly spoken, and when she had something to say it generally packed a punch.

In 2009 Jenny volunteered to be the Society's archivist. Her library skills were invaluable as she gathered meeting minutes, newsletters, and photos from the start of Orange Field Nats in 1974. In 2024 she used this material to write an anniversary book called '50 years: A History of the Orange Field Naturalist and Conservation Society'. No-one else had the knowledge and dedication to achieve such a wonderful result. Murray Fletcher, a fellow Field Nats member, commented that he was 'impressed with the detail and presentation of the book.'

Between 2015 and 2024 Jenny joined the Field Nats Committee as Assistant Treasurer. While on the Committee she helped guide the Society and provided practical assistance through her great command of the English language. She wrote articles and submissions, provided photos for the newsletter, and occasionally organised an excursion. Jenny always commented on submissions and since 2019 proofread the monthly newsletter that I edited.

While not directly a Field Nats activity Jenny undertook the huge task of proofreading the publication 'Orchids of Central Western NSW' that was co-authored by Col Bower and Dick Medd. Chris Pratten, the Society's founder, in his launch of the book commented, not once but three times, that he could not find one single thing to criticise! This was a HUGE compliment in which Jenny played a big part.

Jenny also had an interest in history. In 2021 she researched historical records and parish maps to write about the European history of Mt Canobolas. This was published on the Society's website and last year was one of the most visited pages. She enjoyed, but was sometimes frustrated, that finding a relevant document would lead to another and then another. She would often spend hours following up these

leads. We often joked that these journeys were like going down wombat burrows.

For their significant contributions Jenny and Dick were awarded Life Membership of Field Nats in April 2024. They helped raise awareness of the environment and educated members and the community about it.

We all have different memories of Jenny. An early one for Jennifer Kenna is of an outing where the Medds rescued a White-faced Heron that had been hit by a car. Jenny was sitting in the car kindly nursing the Heron on her lap with just its head poking out of a towel. I remember quiet days with her wandering around the mountain or at Bumberry in Goobang National Park. I also remember walking up to their mulberry tree at Nashdale with my daughter Catherine and watching the lizards, skinks, and birds from the veranda. Jenny often looked at places differently and took photos that had a unique and artistic perspective.

Jenny will be sadly missed not only by the Society and its members but by all the creatures and biodiversity that she advocated for. As Eric Tanner, another member, said 'Jenny was a wonderful lady who lived a full life and made a difference to her world.' She also made a difference to our world.

When you are next on the mountain, I encourage you to take a moment to stop, look out and remember Jenny.

Tiger Pear Update

Report by Penny Todman, photos by Tony Caine.

It has been a year since we began our small effort at Mookerwah to control Tiger Pear by introducing the Cochineal scale insect, a Mealybug.



Inoculated Tiger Pear.

Today we walked around our cabin and several nearby cabins, spreading more infected material onto healthy Tiger Pear and pulling out a large bin of plants to take back to DPI for further inoculation. As we moved through the area, we were pleased to see clear signs that the earlier work had taken hold. The Cochineal had established itself in the patch and was already infecting a number of Tiger Pear plants.



Dead and dying Tiger Pear.

We also spoke with a staff member from the Mookerwah Reflections Park, who told us that they too had been supplied with the insect. So, we will keep going with the work. With time and persistence, we hope this approach will help bring the pest under control for the next generation.

Retail sale of SGARS soon to be banned.

Used with permission from [BirdLife Southern NSW's March 2026 Newsletter](#).

Six years ago, a team from BirdLife Australia, headed up by Dr Holly Parsons, set off on a mission to have wildlife killing Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs) banned. Last week the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) requested the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to effectively ban the retail sale of SGARs by declaring them “Restricted Chemical Products”. This decision by the APVMA is a win for Dr Parsons and her dedicated team.

Very shortly after the APVMA announced their request, Bunnings, reputedly Australia's largest retailer of SGARs, announced their intention to remove all SGARs products from their shelves by 30th June – another big win for BirdLife Australia and Dr Parsons who staged a consumer campaign targeted at Bunnings. It is hoped that this outcome will encourage other large retailers such as Woolworths, Coles and Mitre 10 to follow suit.

SGARS are very powerful, single-feed rat and mouse poisons that pose significant secondary poisoning risks to wildlife and pets. Birds such as raptors, owls, including the vulnerable Powerful Owl and even Magpies are affected if they eat a dead rat or mouse that has been killed by these poisons.

Dates for your Diary

Sunday April 7, 9.00 am (Easter Sunday). Spring Creek Quarterly Bird Survey.

Meet at the gates to the reservoir on Lone Pine Avenue. We walk to the dam wall and record any birds we see. The 2 km walk usually takes about 2 hours.

March 7 – May 17. Spiders of Paradise exhibition at the Orange Regional Gallery. Maria Fernanda Cardoso presents new works from her Spiders of Paradise series and her acclaimed video work *On the Origins of Art 1-11* (2016). Her subjects are the tiny Australian Maratus spider – less than 5mm in size – and their colourful and patterned abdomens.



A must-see exhibition. If you go, look at the top right corner of the frame to see the actual size of the spider. Photo R Stapleton.

2026 Cowra Bird Survey Dates: 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.

Contact **Jayden Gunn** for more information or to register for the surveying at jayden.gunn@birdlife.org.au

March 14 – June 8. Transformations: Art of the Scott Sisters.

This exhibition at the Orange Regional Museum brings the work of Harriet and Helena Scott to life. They worked together to transform nature into art in extraordinary paintings of moths and butterflies in two volumes in 1864 and 1898. Another must see exhibition as their artwork is amazing.

May 3, 10.30 – 1.00 pm.

Fungi Foray on Gaanha Bula Mt Canobolas.

Information from Liz Davis, CTLLS.

Register at:

<https://events.humanitix.com/gaanha-bula-mt-canobolas-fungi-foray-may-2026>

Meet at Federal Falls Picnic Area where small groups, led by experienced fungi finders, will head off to different parts of the SCA to search for and record fungi.

A warm cup of soup will be provided during the midday break. If demand is high, we may open an additional afternoon session running until 2:30 pm. If you're placed on the waiting list, don't be discouraged - this helps us determine whether to run the extra group.

Sightings around Orange

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

Things with Wings

On the weekend of 22 March Nigel Hobden walked around Gosling Creek Reserve. He was lucky to come across what appears to be a family of **Brown Quail**, with two adults and a juvenile, crossing the bitumen pathway (below).



He also spotted some Red-browed Finches and captured these almost perfectly posed pair of **Black Swans**.



The March talk was about tracking Superb Parrots. Check out this link to see how **Bogong Moths** are being tracked. Wow!

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-05/scientists-tagging-bogong-moths-to-solve-mystery/106416680>

Animals

Snakes seem to be having a good season with Nigel Hobden encountering this colourful **Highland Copperhead** (below) at Spring Creek Reservoir. Rosemary Stapleton saw a much more relaxed one sunning itself at the northern end of the track at Ploughmans Wetland.



Plants

On 8 March Hai Wu had a great time finding flowering orchids in Wambool Nature Reserve. He found one flower spike of *Corunastylis sp. aff. sagittifera* 1, the **Arrow Midge Orchid** and a few *C. clivicola*, the **Hills Midge Orchid**. Hai also found **Red-tipped Tiny Greenhood**, *Speculantha rubescens*. He said the trails have just been maintained and are smooth and quite pleasant to walk on.



The Arrow Midge Orchid, photo Hai Wu.

Other autumn flowering orchid species have been seen in Mt Canobolas SCA. On 21 March Hai Wu walked to one of the rocky slopes near

the Stringy Bark Trail and saw ‘hundreds of **Parsons Bands** orchids flowering’. On the same day Rosemary Stapleton came across a group of **Diplodium reflexum** (below) along Old Canobolas Road. In the same area the liverworts had responded to the recent rain, however the mosses seemed slower to recover.



When along Gum Ridge Trail with Jack, Rosemary noticed liverworts in a wetter patch beside the trail. Dr Chris Cargill suggested a bigger leaved one looked like **Riccia cartilaginosa**. Chris said of a much tinier one (below) ‘it looks more like one of the semi-aquatics - like **Riccia multifida** or **R. duplex**. Those long thin branches are more typical of those species.’ She also commented that it would be interesting to look at it a bit later in the season.



After being in the SCA Hai visited Lake Canobolas and photographed some ‘flat form’ **Wahlenbergia**. Col Bower made the following comments on Hai’s photos. ‘The Bluebell is the Mount Canobolas one which will soon be published as **Wahlenbergia meddii** or **Medds Bluebell**. The leaf photos are the clincher. The short fleshy leaves are characteristic of this species. Interesting that you found a flower with four petals. This often happens in Bluebells, but this is the first I’ve seen for *W. meddii*. This is

also only the third population confirmed outside the Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area. It seems to be scattered between Orange and Mount Canobolas on volcanic soils and was probably quite common pre-European settlement.’



Four petalled Bluebell. Photo Hai Wu.

Coincidentally Nigel photographed another four petalled Bluebell, possibly **Wahlenbergia stricta**, this week on Coolabah Drive at the entrance to the Bridal Track.



Insects

Nigel Hobden photographed this **Orchard Butterfly** (below) in an urban backyard in Orange in mid-March.



Jack Fry, NPWS Ranger, spotted a **Blue-banded Bee** at the gate of the Gum Ridge Trail on Mt Canobolas SCA on 16 March. After seeing Jack’s great photo (below) Murray Fletcher commented that ‘the “colouring” is

actually a band of pale hairs across the posterior margin of the abdominal tergites. The colour can vary depending on the light. Sometimes they look bluer and other times whiter.'



Creature of the Month – April 2026

Superb Fairy-wren, *Malurus cyaneus*. Often called the Blue Wren or Jenny Wren.

Text and photos Rosemary Stapleton.

Most of us would be familiar with these little sociable birds that hop around in loose small groups in gardens and undergrowth in forests and woodland. Their preferred habitat needs cover as well as open areas for feeding. They tend to rush away when disturbed although some breeding males can perch on the top of shrubs and sing or keep watch.



Male and female Superb Fairy-wren.

Breeding males have a bright blue cap, cheek patch, and upper back. They have a dark blue throat patch, chest, and tail, with brown wings and whitish underparts. Their bill is black and their thin little legs are orangey pink. The males moult after breeding and their non-breeding, or eclipse plumage is comparatively dull and like the females and immature males. These birds are mousey brown with whitish underparts, like many other Fairy-wren species, but you can tell the Superb apart by their darker red-brown bill, lores and eye-ring. Some older or dominant males can retain their coloured feathers all year.



A young male Superb Fairy-wren moulting into breeding plumage.

Superb Fairy-wrens can nest from August to January and can breed twice or more a year. Their nest is a loose dome of dry grass and rootlets bound together with spider-web. It is hidden low in shrubs, grass, or reeds. It has a large side entrance towards the top of the dome. Three to five speckled white eggs are laid.

Don't be fooled into thinking that the male of a pair is the father of all the chicks in a nest. Studies of Fairy-wrens have shown they are co-operative breeders and although they nest in pairs many of the chicks are sired by males from nearby territories.



Four hungry chicks being fed by the female Superb Fairy-wren.

You will see these delightful birds all through the south-east of mainland Australia and Tasmania. Further west of here on the plains you may see Variegated, White-winged or Splendid Fairy-wrens.

Sources

- Beruldsen, G (2003). Australian Birds their nests and eggs. Self published.
- Menkhorst P, et al (2017). The Australian Bird Guide. CSIRO Publishing.
- Slater P, et al (2009). The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds, 2nd edition. Reed New Holland (Aust) Pty Ltd.



Nigel spotted this Scaly-footed Lizard. Pat points out that you can see the "vestigial hind limb flap" or "scaly flap" quite clearly....follow the arrow. Photo Patrick Driver.



View from the second lookout on Finnigan's Track. Photo Nigel Hobden.

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Please identify payments with your name and send confirmation of the payment to orangefieldnats@gmail.com. You can also pay by cash at a meeting or at Orange Credit Union.

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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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