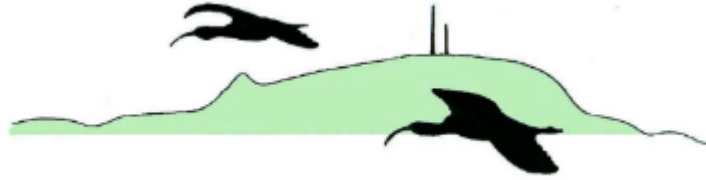


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc



NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2026

Next Talk

Thursday 8 October, 7.30pm
Acoustic monitoring of Koalas in the Clifton Grove area 2025.

Online **OR** at Nguluway Ngurang Seniors Village Hub North Room, southern side of Harris Farm and Woolworths carpark

Next Excursion

Sunday 11 October, 9.00 am
Birri Birri Burial Stone Site and Clear Creek Cliffs, Turon State Forest.

Next Talk – Thursday 8 October, 7.30pm.
Acoustic monitoring of Koalas in the Clifton Grove area 2025.

Speakers:

Julie Reynolds - Senior Land Services Officer, Central Tablelands LLS – Mudgee, and
Tim Nalder - Land Services Officer, Central Tablelands LLS – Orange.

In November 2025, an acoustic koala monitoring project was run in the Clifton Grove area of Orange. Find out more about how acoustic monitoring is expanding our knowledge of koala populations in our Central Tablelands area.



A Koala, Phascolarctos cinereus. Stock image.

Julie and Tim worked with 15 landholders in Clifton Grove to install acoustic koala monitoring devices on their property. They will

present the findings of the monitoring project and run through a demonstration of how acoustic monitoring works. The acoustic recordings were also searched for the calls of Barking Owls and Squirrel Gliders. Tim will touch on the next steps for the project including partnering with CT Landcare and landholders in the removal of barb wire from fences in the area.

Julie and Tim have both worked with the Local Land Services in the Natural Resource Management Team for over 10 years. They have worked with landholders to improve the condition of their natural capital assets. They have encouraged on-ground actions such as tree planting corridors, fencing off and improvement of riparian areas, as well as enhancement of existing remnant vegetation.



*An example of the habitat at Clifton Grove.
Photo R Stapleton.*

Where: Seniors Village Hub, North Room, on the southern side of the Harris Farm and Woolworths carpark. **OR online.** Please register for the link at orangefieldnats@gmail.com

Next Excursion- Sunday 11 October, 9.00 am.

Birri Birri Burial Stone Site, Turon State Forest and Clear Creek Cliffs, overlooking Winburndale Nature Reserve.

Leader: Steve Woodhall

Grade: 3 – moderate. No formed trails, uneven surfaces and slopes.

Steve will lead the excursion to the Birri Birri Burial Stone Aboriginal Site in the Turon State Forest. The significance of the site will be discussed, and time will be spent locating and looking at the known stone mounds. This is an area of heath with the ground covered in lichen and mosses. There may be orchids flowering.



Steve Woodhall (in red) leading members at Birri Birri Burial Stone Aboriginal Site on a cold day in June 2023. Photo R Stapleton.

The next stop will be the cliffs above Clear Creek which is a scenic area with interesting geology, plants and panoramic views of Winburndale Nature Reserve and lands back towards Bathurst. Field Nats visited these sites in June 2023 on a very cold day and at the time thought we needed to come back later one year.



Cliffs above Clear Creek and the view back to Bathurst. Photo Jenny Medd.

4WD's are essential and we will need to carpool. The trail has damaged areas of pooled water, but passage is generally good.

Meet at the Orange High bus bay at 9am sharp. We will drive to Bathurst, have a toilet stop at Hector Park at the entry to Bathurst and then meet Steve near the hockey fields just after the bridge over the Macquarie River. Come prepared for a full day excursion. Bring morning tea, lunch, water, and any essential medications you may need. Please wear closed walking shoes and suitable clothing.

Last Talk: Thursday 10 September.

Biocultural restoration: addressing linked declines of ecosystems and Aboriginal cultural values to create uniquely Australian ways of caring for Country.

Speaker: Associate Professor Emilie Ens, lead Cross-cultural Ecology, Education and Restoration Group, Macquarie University.

Report by Marita Sydes.

Emilie has recently moved to the Orange area and is keen to explore opportunities to combine Western science with the knowledge and values of local and Indigenous land custodians to care for Country in the central west. This evening's talk explored the concepts and opportunities for biocultural restoration. The presentation given by Emilie attracted an audience of 20 people including some new faces. Emilie has recently become a member of Orange Field Nats.

Emilie's presentation began with a thoughtful acknowledgement of country reflecting on personal experiences from her connection to Elders from her work in the remote Arnhem Land. The presentation then moved into exploring the concept of biocultural restoration.

Biocultural restoration is defined as the practice of repairing degraded ecosystems while simultaneously revitalizing the cultural, linguistic, and reciprocal relationships between local communities and their environment. Diagrams from Sena *et al.* (2022) were used to explore the differences between ecosystem-orientated restoration and biocultural restoration. The key difference being that biocultural restoration promotes the usefulness of restoration. It also promotes high redundancy, by including many species in the restoration works that perform the same function, thus building resilience into the restoration. This is a concept that is not often included in more traditional ecosystem restoration activities. Another critical aspect of biocultural restoration is that it aims to be socially inclusive and in doing so aims to promote local monitoring and increases restoration success.

The next section of the talk focussed on discussion as to why biocultural restoration is relevant to the central west. Emilie reflected on the long human history of the region and the 1,000s of generations of the Wiradjuri, Wailwan and Kamilaroi in the broader region. Talking

about the deep connectedness between people, ecosystems and species and the intricate use, manipulation and seasonal movement across Country. Two historic images were used to reflect on these deep connections.

In the write up on the *Orange Blossoms: A cultural history of gardens in Orange and district* there was an image (below) that depicted how Wiradjuri women used digging sticks to harvest roots and tubers and find yams around the base of trees and shrubs on their page describing the Wiradjuri Gardeners.



<https://orangeblossoms.orangemuseum.com.au/pages/history/wiradjuri.cfm>

The second image from the Mathieu Gallois article on *Country, Spirit and Belonging: The Wiradjuri in Wellington Valley, 2012* depicts the domestic occupations of Wiradjuri in the summer season on the lower Murray River.



Engraving by Gustav Mützel after a sketch by William Blandowski made during the 1856-7 Murray River expedition. Domestic occupations in the summer season on the Lower Murray River. 1862. Courtesy Haddon Library, Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, UK.

In the lower centre part of Mützel engraving six Wiradjuri people are depicted playing Woggabaliri.

Image courtesy: Watercolour by Henry Godfrey, 1843. Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

Source: <https://orangeblossoms.orangemuseum.com.au/pages/history/wiradjuri.cfm>

Emilie was challenging our perception of historic reflection – or things that happened in the past to the biocultural perspective where reflections include the now as well as views into the future rather than just the past.

In contrast to the 1,000s of generations of local Indigenous culture, European history in the area represents only 5-7 generations since European colonisation. In this time there has been impact on Aboriginal groups, cultural knowledge, practices and languages. Diverse ecosystems have been replaced by monocultures. Land clearing and degradation is extensive – 57% of native vegetation has been cleared.

The next drawing included depicts the artist Augustus Earle in his water colour drawing *Bathurst Plains and Settlement* from about 1825. Many in the audience tried to work out the view depicted. The drawing was also unusual as it included Aboriginal people and Europeans in the same scene.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bathurst_Plains_and_Settlement.jpg

Emilie then discussed the possible opportunities there are through the Central West Orana (CWO) Conservation Investment Strategy that was recently published by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW 2026). The plan has highlighted priority investment areas where we could potentially embrace biocultural restoration concepts in and around the Orange area. Figure 10 (below) from the CWO Conservation Investment Strategy maps the identified priority investment areas in the central west, including the identification of priority corridor areas to build habitat connection across the region.

The CWO Conservation Investment Strategy was also seen to be able to provide opportunities for Aboriginal landowners, local Aboriginal land councils and other Aboriginal organisations in the region. This could include increased incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into the management of country and strategy priority actions.

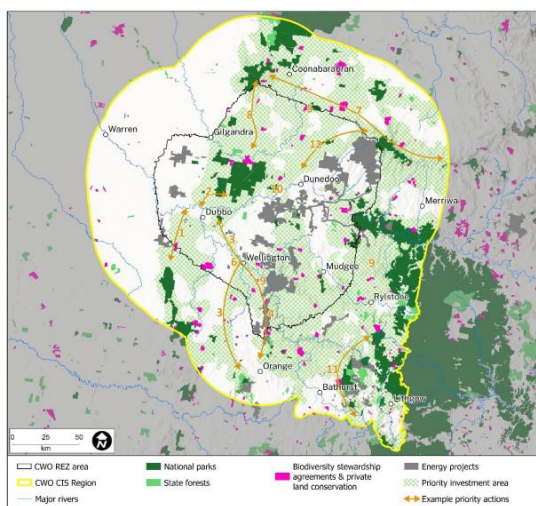


Figure 10 Priority investment areas and examples of priority outcomes in the Central West Orana region

Emilie then moved to show us her life journey, including her last 20 years working with Aboriginal groups and Elders across Australia to explore how we can work together to conserve our unique environments and species while also supporting the maintenance and/or revitalisation of Aboriginal languages, knowledge, and cultural responsibilities for Country. In developing these projects Emilie was able to give some pointers on how we can develop local biocultural projects:

- Work together
- Combine contemporary and traditional uses, values, skills and needs
- Points of mutual interest
- Explore where funding can be leveraged/combined/stacked to enhance biological and cultural outcomes
- Recognising limited environmental and cultural funds.

Two practical examples of biocultural projects that she has been involved in were outlined by Emilie. The first was a Biocultural Restoration project in Arnhem Land looking at working together to manage threats from pigs, buffalo and sea level rise that results in salt water intrusion that impact floodplains including the stands of *Eleocharis dulcis*. It is a native sedge that is grown in many countries for its edible corms. The project has used carbon measurements to generate opportunity to get paid for carbon credits to get rid of feral pigs and buffalo, has resulted in the revegetation of damaged areas and more recently has had cultural value credits added. It has also resulted in the relearning of traditional fish trap methods. References included: Jones et al. (2025).



Emilie (centre) at work with Yolŋu colleagues Djuna Wunungmurra (right) and Milirripin Gumana (Djuna's daughter) on the Gurrumuru coastal floodplain in northeast Arnhem Land.

Photo Oscar Jones.

The Dharug Ngurra, Sydney project was an example of cultural burning and the revitalising of knowledge through the restoration of the cultural meaningful edible root grounds.

Opportunities for Biocultural Restoration in the Central West would work to build on work that is already happening in the region, including the cultural burning of native grassy woodlands, traditional weaving, bush foods and the idea of native polycultures (e.g. yam daisy mixed with other native edibles).

On the night we talked about a range of potential biocultural projects that could be undertaken in the Central West including; native polyculture food crops grown in solar farms, the old golf course at Bloomfield being regenerated into woodlands, growing orchid and yam daisies as a food source locally, restoring other edible root grounds including fern rhizomes, and restoring species that are used in traditional weaving.

Sources:

DCCEEW (2026).

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/publications/central-west-orana-conservation-investment-strategy>

Sena *et al.* (2022). Biocultural restoration improves delivery of ecosystem services in social-ecological landscapes. *Restoration Ecology* 30(5): e13599.

Jones, O. R., Mununggurr, L., Mununggurr, Y., Marrkula, T., Wunungmurra, B., Rangers, Y., Hutley, L., Fryirs, K. & Ens, E., (Nov 2025). Carbon and corms: introduced ungulates and saltwater intrusion variably impact coastal floodplain ecosystem services in the Laynhapuy Indigenous Protected Area, northern Australia. In: *People and Nature*. 7, 11, p. 2923-2939 17 p.

Last Excursion: Sunday 13 September.
South West Woodlands Nature Reserve –
Mandagery Precinct and Mingham Springs.
Report by Nigel Hobden.

A small group of enthusiastic members arrived at the Orange High School bus bay to travel to South West Woodlands Nature Reserve (SWWNR) – Mandagery Precinct. Field Nats had received permission to visit the reserve from the NSW National Parks Service. We split across three cars as Rosemary and Nigel were both recovering from sickness. After a quick pit stop in Manildra, we continued to the Mandagery Precinct. It is off the Henry Parkes Way, following Coates Creek Road and Monaghans Road, driving through various private properties. Just before the reserve Rosemary and Netta observed White-backed Swallows that were possibly building nest hollows in an eroded watercourse embankment.

At the gate to the SWWNR we stopped for a briefing and outline of the day. As we drove along the Mandagery Fire Trail, we noted the number of felled trees and trees that had been cut for firewood, much more prevalent than on our previous visit over 12 months ago.

Leading the fleet of vehicles Nigel took the crew past the Shean Fire Trail, the direct route to the Mingham Springs walking track, to explore the area of the Mandagery Fire Trail. We stopped to explore woodland and saw masses of the Large Waxlip Orchid (*Glossodia major*) lighting up the ground with their vibrant purple or mauve flowers. Participants also spotted many Pink Fingers and Blue Fairy Orchids (*Caladenia carnea* and *C. caerulea* respectively).



Glossodia major orchids. Photo Nigel Hobden.

After a couple of pauses along this fire trail to explore the woodland, we turned around and headed along the Shean Fire Trail to the Mingham Springs walking trail start point. Mingham Springs is on Crown Land managed by Crown Lands NSW and is not part of the National Parks Estate.

Before hiking to Mingham Springs we took a break to have our lunch and recharge. At the lunch point Horse Dung Fungus were spotted (*Pisolithus* sp). A puffball fungus that is found on the soil surface as the fruiting body forces its way through the soil crust.

As we wandered down the walking track, we observed a section of track that an Emu had recently walked. In the muddy surface of the track there were distinctive footprints and several feathers were also found.



Emu tracks. Photo Netta Holmes.

Midway along the track we found a purple pea flower, a *Swainsona* sp., later confirmed by Hai, looking back on his records of chats with Dick Medd as possibly Variable *Swainsona* (*Swainsona oroboides*).



Swainsona flowers. Photo Helmut Berndt.

Throughout the woodland there were many patches of sundews. In several places we spotted the less common *Drosera glanduligera*, the orange flowered species we saw in Killonbutta NR in September 2024.



Drosera glanduligera. Photo R Stapleton.

As we arrived at the Mingham Springs gorge we crouched or knelt to observe flowers of the Diamond Ant Orchid (*Chiloglottis trapeziformis*). On our previous visit the leaves had carpeted the ground but on this visit, there were many flowers but not so many leaves. The many patches of *Riccia* liverworts seen in 2025 had dried but there were more hornworts, many with their 'horns', scattered on patches of exposed soil.



Chiloglottis trapeziformis. Photo Netta Holmes.

At the top of the gorge some group members relaxed and enjoyed the flatter landscape. Those a little more adventurous scrambled over the rocky terrain on the western side of the gorge to take in the view from the top of the escarpment to the south and that of the sheer cliffs on the eastern side of the gorge.



Nigel on the western side of the gorge.
Photo Helmut Berndt.

After about half an hour of exploring but not venturing down to the foot of the gorge, we turned around and headed back up the trail to our vehicles on the Shean Fire Trail.



Back at the vehicles. Photo Netta Holmes.

In all we found seven different orchids in flower. Others not described above were the *Pterostylis mutica* and *Pterostylis nana* (possibly) as well as *Diuris goonooensis*, the Western Donkey Orchid. Rosemary's bird count included Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Rufous Whistlers, Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Olive-back Oriole, Red Wattlebird, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Grey Fantail, Black-faced Cuckooshrikes, White-naped Honeyeater and a Gerygone.

Arriving back at the vehicles we gathered for a group photo (see last page) before heading out of the reserve, stopping to see if the White-

backed Swallows were about the cutting with hollows excavated into the eroded bank.



Probable nest hollows of the swallows in the eroded bank. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

Thanks to Nigel Hobden for leading the excursion at short notice. It was one which I am sure we all enjoyed as did those who joined virtually on WhatsApp.

OFNCS Committee News

Welcome to new member Begs Lund who joined us for the August excursion.

The two Biodiversity Month spotlighting evenings have been the main activity this month. (See article below.) An objection to the Wilpinjong Coal Mine Continuation Proposal was submitted to the National Environment Protection Agency. This proposed clearing of 810ha of land east of Wollar, which contains stands of intact remnant woodland and scattered old growth paddock trees. It would also impact threatened species and water resources.

Biodiversity Month Spotlighting Events

Report by Nigel Hobden.

This year two locations were used for the Biodiversity Spotlighting. A mid-week event, on Wednesday 16 September exploring the Orange City Council bushland reserve at Clifton Grove and a Friday night event on the 18th at the Orange Botanic Gardens.

The Clifton Grove event was well attended with some 16 to 18 guests and coordinator of the local biodiversity month events from the Central Tablelands Local Land Service, Tim Nalder and Nigel Hobden, OCC, and OFNCS vice president as group leader. Walking along the fire trail from the corner of Ironbark Road and Brumbies Run it wasn't long before Nigel spotted the first eye shine reflecting in the torch light at a height of

about one metre above ground level in Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*). Manoeuvring to facilitate a clearer view, the eye shine was observed to be coming from one of the small gliding marsupials, likely to be a Squirrel Glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*), a vulnerable species. An exciting first observation at such a low height and proximity.



Nigel explaining safe spotlight to participants at the Clifton Grove Reserve. Photo Peter West.

Other observations were a Tawny Frogmouth, many frogs around the wetter parts of the landscape and a second Squirrel Glider as we exited the reserve.

The Friday night walk through Orange Botanic Gardens was attended by around 14 people. Five of whom were visiting Orange from Wellington, three kids and two adults. They were excited to have stumbled upon the group gathering for the spotlighting and although not registered were welcomed into the night. Once again Nigel led the group with Tim assisting. The Orange Botanic Gardens walk observed around 18 Brushtail Possums: two mothers with young old enough to be exploring on their own.

The water bodies proved to be great for listening to frogs. We heard the Eastern Sign-bearing Frog, Eastern Banjo Frog, Spotted Marsh Frog, and the Whistling Tree Frog.

November OFNCS Activities

Thursday 12 November Talk.

The role of climate on nest morphology in superb fairy-wrens (*Malurus cyaneus*).
Silvia Colombo, Melbourne University.

Sunday 15 November Excursion.

Wambool Nature Reserve looking for Flying Duck Orchids. Leader Hai Wu.

2026 Senior Volunteer of the Year Award

At the Central West Regional Volunteer of the Year Award Ceremony on 23 September Rosemary was recognised as one of many Senior Volunteers of the Year. Geoff Selwood had made the nomination to recognise Rosemary's work as OFNCS secretary and newsletter editor as well as her long history as a citizen scientist. Geoff had spoken to Catherine Stapleton who remembered that Rosemary's first project was to survey dung beetles for the CSIRO's kids' magazine Double Helix in the 1980's! In the nomination Geoff also mentioned that since 2018 Rosemary had been involved, with scientists, in post fire biodiversity surveys and the recording of Aboriginal artefacts on Gaanhabula Mt Canobolas.



*Rosemary receiving her award from local mayors, Paul Smith, Cowra Shire and Cassandra Coleman, Lithgow City Council.
Photo NSW Centre for Volunteering.*

Vale Malcolm Stacey

Sadly, Malcolm passed away on 31 August 2026. Malcolm, and his wife Di, joined Field Nats in 2021. While he never attended many Field Nats activities, he always gave positive feedback about the newsletters and how he had often learnt something new from them. At the start of 2026 he agreed to take on the task of proofreading each edition and I'd like to acknowledge Malcolm for playing this behind-the-scenes role. He was enthusiastic about the local environment and after moving to Orange, from Parkes, he was secretary of the Ploughman's Wetland Care Group. He was a member of ECCO and a community representative on the Orange City Council Parks, Trees and Waterways Committee and the Environmental Sustainability Community Committee.

Orange Field Nats extends our sincere sympathy to Di and their family.

Mt Canobolas Bluebell, *Wahlenbergia meddii*

In July 2025 Col Bower, in his talk to Field Nats, asked 'Is *Wahlenbergia* 'Mt Canobolas' a new species? (See August 2025 OFNCS Newsletter.) The answer is **YES**, and it has just been named *Wahlenbergia meddii*.

It is recognised as a new species as Col has had his article on the taxonomy of the species published in the latest issue of *Telopea*, the plant systematics journal of the Botanic Gardens of Sydney. Go to this link to read about Col's meticulous research and analysis and why the rotate-flowered Mt Canobolas Bluebell should be recognised as a distinct species. [A new species of rotate-flowered *Wahlenbergia* \(Campanulaceae: Campanuloideae\) from the Mount Canobolas volcanic complex in New South Wales | *Telopea*](#). The species is restricted to the volcanic soils of the Mt Canobolas volcanic complex, so is another very local endemic species.



Wahlenbergia meddii in a favourite rocky habitat on the mountain. Photo Col Bower.

In the etymology section of the paper Col states that the name *Wahlenbergia meddii* 'honours the work of Richard William Medd (1946-) for being the first to recognise the possible distinctiveness of this new species and for his tireless work, along with his wife Jenny, for the protection of the biological values of the Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area (SCA). Dick Medd is also recognised for successfully nominating Mt Canobolas flora species as threatened under NSW State legislation.'

Another conclusion of Col's research is that *Wahlenbergia planiflora* subsp. *longipila* was distinctive and should be recognised as a full species called *Wahlenbergia longipila*. It occurs widely in the Pilliga scrub on sandy soils in drier habitats. Details of it are also in his paper.

Reference: Bower C (2026) A new species of rotate-flowered Wahlenbergia (Campanulaceae: Campanuloideae) from the Mount Canobolas volcanic complex in New South Wales. Telopea 30:207-231. Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Bird flu H5N1 and peregrine falcons

Report from Cilla Kinross.

While our peregrine pair, Diamond and Gimbir, look after three eggs high in the nest box in the water tower at CSU, Orange (due to hatch on or after 10th October), reports of the H5N1 bird flu in Australia continue to multiply. H5N1 is a form of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus so you may see it referred to as HPAI. Mostly so far occurring in seabirds, and usually fatal, there has been a confirmed detection of bird flu in a whistling kite at Tuross Heads, NSW just two days ago. Peregrine falcons are particularly vulnerable as their prey are birds and the virus can be transmitted that way and carcasses can remain contagious for up to 20 days.

It did occur to me that vaccination would be a way of protecting our local falcon family, but it's not feasible – partly as the vaccines are preserved for captive birds and threatened species, but also because only the nestlings are available for capture and vaccination and they need two doses three weeks apart, which would make it near impossible as they are only in the nest box for six weeks.

For more information, Victor Hurley of the Victorian Peregrine Project has written an excellent fact sheet on this topic, available on the 367 Collins St. Facebook page or contact me on ckinross@csu.edu.au and I can send you a copy.

Dates for your Diary

Aussie Bird Count – 19-25 October 2026.

This aims to capture a national snapshot of how birds are faring. You can do a 20 minute 2ha survey anywhere and as many surveys as you like during this week.

REGISTER NOW

Dubbo Field Nats will be visiting Borenore Caves on 25 October. If you would like to join them, you need to register at their website <https://www.dubbofieldnats.org.au/> or you can

email trip leader Robert Quinan directly at quinanr@tpg.com.au

2027 Cowra Bird Survey Dates: 5-7 February, 16-18 April, 23-25 July. The October dates are still to be set. A big weekend is planned then to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the program and the release of the latest analysis of the surveys. If surveying, you are asked to be at a get together on the Friday night to meet your survey team and get site instructions and maps.

Contact **Jayden Gunn** for more information 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

Many of the migrant species are back in Orange, some a little earlier than usual. This includes moths, such as **Bogong Moths**. Other insects such as hover flies, also seem more abundant.

The **Grey-headed Flying Foxes** are back at their roost site on Ploughmans Lane, opposite the oval. Nigel reports they arrived within the first few days of September, which is around two months earlier than normal.

Superbs Parrots were first seen at TAFE Rural Studies on 8/9. They also flew over the ECCO tree planting at Diamond Drive Reserve on 17/9 and Dick Medd has been hearing them at his place at Nashdale.

On 24/9 Alison Ford heard strange calls outside her kitchen window. It was a female **Pacific Koel** arguing with a Red Wattlebird. Alison hasn't seen any males Koels yet.

Ploughmans Wetland has the chorus of **Australian Reed Warblers** back. If you have visited the wetland, you will see that, for the second year, it is hosting a breeding colony of **Australian White Ibis**. Chicks have already hatched and are still fluffy white balls. On a survey on 26/9 there were at least 115 ibis and chicks. No Latham's Snipe were seen perhaps because the water level is still a bit high and there are no exposed mud flats.

Orchids

The field of **Common Golden Moths**, *Diuris chryseopsis*, at the recreation reserve at Mullion Creek, has created lots of interest. A number of

members have visited and reported that the flowers were higher than last year. Patrick Driver photographed the field on 12/9 (below).



Netta Holmes was in Killonbutta Nature Reserve on 8/9 and saw these dark flowers of *Caladenia filamentosa* or Daddy Long Legs (below).



A patch of Bearded Greenhoods, *Pterostylis plumosa*, was found by Hai on 12/9 on the Ironbark Track in Conimbla NP (below).



Creature of the Month

Wandering Percher or Red Percher Dragonfly, *Diplacodes bipunctata*, (Brauer, 1865)
Article by R Stapleton and P Driver.

During stops in Mandagery Nature Reserve, dragonflies were frequently seen darting through the shrubbery and perching on the ground or low vegetation. Some paused long enough for Rosemary to photograph them, allowing for a closer assessment of their species, age, and gender, by Patrick.

Each one of the photos was a Wandering Percher, which is a small to medium true dragonfly (suborder *Anisoptera*), not a damselfly (*Zygoptera*).

Adult Wandering Perchers frequently fly close to the ground and perch on bare soil or low vegetation, and the photos showed this.



After close inspection, Patrick suggests this Wandering Percher (Rosemary's photo) is a young male, as the deeper red colour is developing in parts. The flattened wing position is for maximum heat absorption.



This is probably a young female and her forward facing wing position is a sun shading position. Photo Rosemary Stapleton.

True Dragonflies

Adult Wandering Perchers are true dragonflies. True dragonflies are generally more robust than damselflies, with larger eyes and wings held open at rest. Their large compound eyes provide almost 360° vision. They have two pairs of transparent, independently controlled wings, giving them exceptional manoeuvrability in flight. This independent control allows them to fly very fast, be very agile in the air and catch their prey very efficiently. All these traits help make them among the most successful aerial predators, with capture rates often exceeding 90%.

Markings and size of adult Wandering Perchers

In mature Wandering Percher adults the male has a bright orange or red abdomen with dark markings along the dorsal line and sides. The female is yellowish with similar markings. Adults are typically 2.8-3.3 cm long with a wingspan of 4.4-5.2 cm.

Wandering Perchers can be compared with the largest and smallest of the true dragonflies of NSW; which incidentally can both be found in the Blue Mountains.

The Eastern Pygmyfly (*Nannophya dalei*) only reaches 2-2.5 cm in length. Patrick photographed this species at Asgard Swamp in the Blue Mountains during December 2025 (below).



The Giant Dragonfly (*Petalura gigantea*) reaches 8-9.5 cm in body length and up to 12.5 cm in wingspan. It is listed in NSW as endangered.

Unlike Wandering Perchers, both of these species are poor long-distance dispersers and are largely confined to their wetland habitats, making them far more vulnerable to local extinction.

Mobility and habitat use of adult Wandering Perchers

Adult Wandering Perchers occupy a wide range of freshwater habitats including pools, creeks, rivers, dams, and both permanent and temporary wetlands. Adults are highly mobile and often occur far from water.

Patrick photographed this adult Wandering Percher at Noonbinnie Nature Reserve near Mt Hope (October 2025), apparently kilometres from any standing water (a nearby dam was dry).



Their larvae are aquatic and live in a wide range of still and flowing waters, including temporary ponds, and are of course confined to their aquatic habitat.

This ability to rapidly colonise temporary wetlands after rain has probably been a key reason for the species' long-term success in Australia's highly variable climate.

Seasonal abundance

Wandering Perchers are especially conspicuous in spring, when adults are abundant and widely dispersed across the landscape. They're out in droves at the moment; from natural areas to parks, and back gardens. Patrick saw them on travels all the way from Orange to coastal Victoria during September.

This dragonfly species is found in all parts of Australia except Tasmania. It is also widespread in New Zealand and found in Indonesia, New Guinea, and some south-Pacific islands.

Behaviour of adult Wandering Perchers

The behaviour of Wandering Perchers also shows their impressive toolbox of adaptations. These all balance the needs of thermoregulation, predator avoidance, and rapid prey interception.

Avoidance of predators by Wandering Perchers is often achieved by:

- Using low perches and stillness between sorties especially in vegetation, which reduces exposure.
- Horizontal perching enables instant escape.
- Excellent vision and rapid acceleration are primary defences.

True dragonflies have many hunting strategies, postures, and functions. If you happen to be watching dragonflies this list will help in understanding what they are doing.

Hunting strategies:

- Perch-and-sally – wait on perch, make short prey-catching flights, return. The primary hunting strategy of the Wandering Percher.
- Hawking – continuous aerial hunting.
- Cruising/patrolling – regular flights searching for prey, mates, or territories.
- Hover-hunting – hover briefly to locate prey before attack.
- Ambush – stationary waiting; uncommon as a primary strategy.

Postures and functions:

- Horizontal perch – hunting, territorial watch, rapid take-off. Common posture of Wandering Perchers.
- Obelisk – abdomen raised; reduces heat gain. Also, a common posture for Wandering Perchers.
- Forward-wing ("sunshade") – wings angled forward; shades body, limits heating. Sometimes used by this species.
- Drooped-wing – wings lowered; cooling/resting.
- Wing-raised ("V") – increases warming; aids drying.
- Basking – wings oriented to maximise solar gain.
- Pendulous – hanging beneath perch; reduces heat load, may improve concealment.

Sources:

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Committee Member of the Month

Marita Sydes, General Committee Member.



Marita at Aspley Falls Picnic Area in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. The bush is Prostanthera williamsii (commonly known as the Wollomombi Gorge Mint Bush). It is a rare Australian native shrub endemic to the Northern Tablelands of NSW.

Photo Patrick Driver.

1. What was your first memory of a nature experience?

One of my earliest nature experience memories is finding Flying Duck orchids in the ironbark forest of Chiltern with Jean Galbraith author of the classic wildflower book - Wild Flowers Of South East Australia Field Guide.

2. Who inspired you to become involved in nature?

My parents. I spent my childhood on Benalla Field Naturalist and Benalla Bushwalking Club outings - my dad was the founding president of both for many years. As a family we spent lots of weekends exploring and walking in the bush of north east Victoria and travelled to places further away for school holidays including central Australia, Flinders Ranges, the Grampians, and Mungo - Menindee areas. In middle high school we headed around Australia for 4 months.

These excursions and travel inspired me in my love of nature, in particular plants and orchids and resulted in me pursuing study and work in plant ecology and conservation fields.

3. What specific aspect of nature are your most interested in?

Plants - always learning new species and plant families with a particular interest in orchids. I like to photograph and share my finds on my social media pages and through iNaturalist.

4. What is your favourite bit of bush/ natural place you like to visit?

In summer holidays I love to get away to the Australian Alps - Bogong High Plains in Victoria and the Mt Kosciuszko area in NSW. For a winter get away I love to head to places warmer than Orange and out into

western NSW. A recent favourite is Round Hill - Mount Hope area for the mallee reserves. I have childhood memories of driving past the Warrumbungles and enjoy regular escapes to the park since moving to NSW in the late 1990's.

For my local weekend getaways my favourite place at any time of year is Conimbla National Park and the Ironbark walking track as I can find orchids here nearly anytime of year.

5. What was your most memorable Field Nats talk or excursion?

No one favourite - just love exploring places with similar minded people, sharing knowledge and the casual conversations on the walks.

6. What is your favourite song about nature and who is it by?

Joni Mitchell's Big Yellow Taxi - encouraging us to appreciate what we have before it's lost.

7. If there's one thing you could change for nature's benefit, what would it be?

People's appreciation for what we have - I love to pass on my passion and love for wildflowers and orchids by sharing what I find on my nature rambles.

You can follow my mainly botanical finds on my iNaturalist account - [msydes's Profile](#) · [iNaturalist Australia](#)

Late note: Did you know there is an iNaturalist sightings page for Bogong Moths? [Bogong Watch · iNaturalist](#) An article in The Guardian reports that there has been an amazing resurgence in Bogong Moth numbers this year and the scientists involved in monitoring them are keen to know the location of sightings. They can be found at night attracted to outside lights or during the day hiding in crevices or just trying to hide. An occasional one can even get inside and should be carefully caught and put outside.



At Mingham Springs Netta and Sandra demonstrated skills not always needed on Field Nats excursions. Some of us just got muddy shoes by walking across the creek on grass clumps. Photo Helmut Berndt.



The excursion group in Mandagery Nature Reserve.

Left to right: Netta Holmes, Sandra Chrystall, Rosemary Stapleton, Jack Fry (NPWS Ranger), Peter Toedter, Hai Wu and leader Nigel Hobden, kneeling. Photo Helmut Berndt.

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Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, including the people of the Wiradjuri Nation. We recognise their continuing connection to lands and waters. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past, present and emerging.

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