

OFNCS 40 year anniversary [submitted by J.A. Medd, Honorary Archivist]

In October 2014, OFNCS will arrive at the milestone of a 40 year anniversary.

The Inaugural Public Meeting on 23rd October, 1974 at the Orange Technical College Theatre attracted 35 people, just a few of whom remain members to this day. Interestingly, one of the best attended meetings in those early days (24th November, 1975), featured a film "The Crystal Kingdom" on Cliefden Caves, with Mr O'Keefe from the Bathurst-Orange Development Corporation present to field questions on the conservation and preservation of such areas.

The inaugural President was Mr Chris Pratten of Borenore, who led the Society for the following ten years and who has since been recognised with a Centenary Medal for services to the community (Jan. 2001) and the award of O.A.M. (Jan. 2005).

Excursions regularly attracted many participants, though the Barton Nature Reserve outing in November 1974 topped all others with 60 people in attendance. The original aims of the Society:

- fostering increasing interest and enjoyment in all aspects of natural history by means of field studies, lectures, films etc. , and
- assisting in the conservation of the environment for the greater benefit of this and future generations by means of representations to the media and federal, state and local government, on issues of both local and wider significance,

obviously found a fair following back then.

One of the Society's first submissions opposed planting of the Boyd Plateau with *Pinus radiata* and supported inclusion of the Plateau in Kanangra Boyd National Park. This was followed by subsequent involvement in issues including (among many others too numerous to list):

- a proposal to create a National Park over the Nangar Range, where 1600ha were finally declared in 1983
- a proposal for a Nature Reserve in the Kangaroo bys which subsequently saw the formation of The Conimbla National Park
- a proposal to create a National park over the Hervey Range and Wanda Wandong Creek State Forests , now Goobang NP
- the establishment of a Nature Reserve at Mingham Springs to protect rare fern species, still under consideration
- opposition to the establishment of an Army Base on the region's reserves, 1984 - 86
- lobbying to bring Canobolas Regional Parklands Trust under the NPWS
- the Ophir Reserve Plan of Management, 1988
- the Mullion Range which has been declared a State Recreation Area
- the establishment of Girralang Nature Reserve
- a comprehensive submission to the Lands Dept. on the review of Crown Lands in the Central West in 2005

- support for the gazettal of Spring Creek Reservoir as a Wildlife refuge, which was successful, unlike the Society's opposition to rowing on the reservoir in 2002 and 2005
- a detailed submission into the Environmental Impact of Bushfires in Australia, 1983
- the restoration of the Dairy Creek roadside wetland
- the Commission of Inquiry into the Cadia Mine Project, 1996; submissions to the Cadia Ridgeway Gold Project Commission of Inquiry, 2000; and the treatment of water from Cadia mines, 2005.

Other local and regional sites in which the Society has been involved include:

Mullion Ranges, Shadforth Reserve, Paling Yards Reserve, Lake Cowal, Macquarie Marshes, Ploughman's Valley wetlands, and Borenore Caves Reserve, as well as the Orange Botanic Gardens and various urban tree plantings.

As well as participating in an annual bird count since 1985, when Wellington Field Naturalists invited Dubbo and Orange to join them as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Gould League in NSW, the Society has also been actively involved in a range of surveys, including:

- Mullion Range small mammal survey, 1985/6
- NPWS bird surveys around Dananbilla Nature Reserve, between Cowra & Young, 1986
- Flora survey for Newcrest's Cadia Mine, 1994/5
- Landcare Plan for Cudal-Lidster Landcare Group, 1996
- Water Bug surveys (Streamwatch) at Fourth Crossing in Autumn and Spring each year, commencing Spring 1986
- NPWS Goobang Fauna survey, 1997
- Ophir Flora and Fauna Survey for Cabonne Council, 1997
- Preparation of an Herbarium of specimens for Wambangalang Studies Centre, 1998
- Flora study for The Ridgeway Project at Cadia, 1998
- Murray-Darling Waterbird Survey, 1999
- Birds in Vineyards project, 2001
- Cobborah State Forest Bird/Biodiversity Survey, 2002
- Community Biodiversity Survey of South Mullion Reserve, 2005
- NPA Mudgee Range Biodiversity Survey, 2005; 2009

OFNCS also published information leaflets for walking tracks on Mt. Canobolas in 1982 and 1998.

More recent activities have been included on the Society's website.

"What next?" one might ask, as the Society currently struggles to attract new members. Is the Society still relevant? Does '40' herald a serious mid-life crisis? Is it time to find a new direction? Who will lead the group forward when the stalwarts can no longer do the job?

For now, congratulations to all those who have participated over the past 40 years - there are achievements to be proud of.