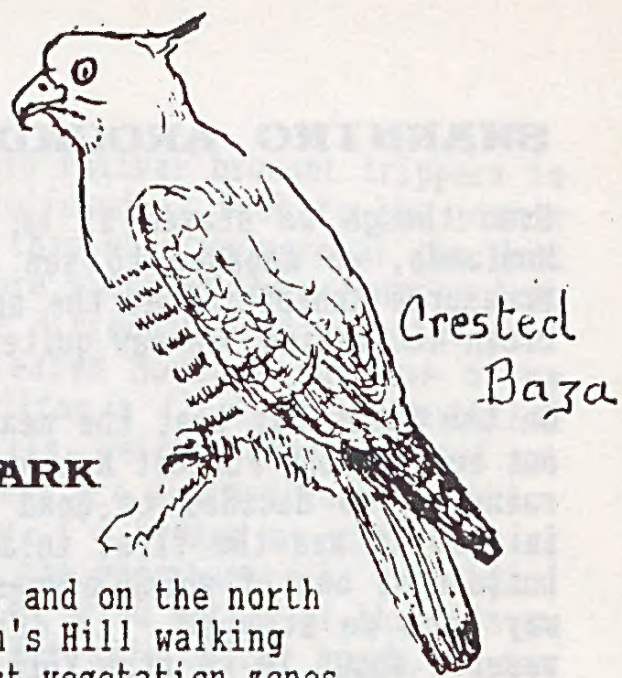


# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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Number 184

MYALL LAKES NATIONAL PARK  
July '92 Part 3



A short drive from Mungo Brush camping area, and on the north side of the Broadwater lake, is the Johnson's Hill walking track of 4 km (each way) through four distinct vegetation zones. It begins at the edge of the lake with melaleucas, *Banksia serrata* and the occasional Smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora*), and leads on through flat sandy terrain with many Burrawong Palms (*cyads*) and tall Grass Trees. At times the flowering spikes of the latter reach 4 metres or more in height.



Burrawong Palm

The first stage of the walk through open woodland leads to a predominance of angophora, before merging with the casuarinas and paperbarks of the damp swampy areas. I checked out the edges of the swamp where I had seen a pair of Crested Hawks (Pacific Bazzas) last October, but they were not around on this occasion. However, both Little and Noisy Friarbirds were enjoying the banksia and melaleuca blossoms.

Towards the end the swamps the eucalypts appear - Swamp Mahogany, bloodwoods, Blackbutt, Spotted Gum, and a few iron-barks, as the track ascends quite steeply to the small forested Johnson's Hill itself, for a panoramic view of the surrounding lakes and distant Nelson Bay.

S.P.

From early August until late October this area is carpeted with a multitude of wildflowers and shrubs - in particular, Flannel Flowers, orchids, heaths, correas, pink boronias, bottlebrushes and a host of others unknown to me. On this July visit the Flannel Flowers were just appearing with correas and heaths and the occasional white caladenia orchid. There were large clumps of Nodding Greenhoods among the abundant Maidenhair Fern at the edge of the track through the swamps.



Grass Trees.

## SWANNING AROUND PERTH

Even though we stayed 22 km out of Perth in the Swan Valley suburb of Midlands, we managed to see quite a bit of the city, even the Russian Treasures Exhibition at the art gallery, going in to the city by the very clean new trains. We saw quite a bit of the surrounds too.

On the first day that the weather looked like it might fine up we headed out to the John Forrest National Park, but after a short walk it started to rain and we decided to head back to York, a historic town about 70 km inland. It was the first inland settlement, and has some fascinating old buildings, one of which houses a valuable historic car collection. On the way back we stopped - in drizzling rain - to have a look at a nature reserve about 10 km from York where York Poinon grows prolifically. I was told that 1080 poison occurs naturally in these peas, and it is fatal to introduced species, but doesn't seem to affect native species.

We enjoyed the drive through the ranges because there were masses of Cats Paws, Kangaroo Paws, all sorts of peas and wattles, and Leschenaultia in flower, 'though I must admit it looked far more impressive when we went out to Mundarring Dam in the sunshine a few days later. This is where the water begins its journey to Kalgoolie and Norseman, supplying the smaller towns on the way.

Out in the bush where we walked, not far from the dam, we saw a stand of the strangest trees I've ever seen. They looked like aluminium masts with a few small branches and leaves on the top.

The trip to Armadale was a delight. Much of the freeway has the natural vegetation left along the sides, and we saw our only Geraldton Wax plants along there. The old friends we went to visit took us out to their favourite reserve near the aquatic centre (no common old swimming pools in W.A.!). It was a picture, with masses of Kangaroo Paws and Cats Paws, Smoke Bush, Blue Leschenaultia, a couple of dampiera species, hibbertias, a hovea, lovely orange/red peas, chorizemas, yellow banjine (rice-flower to us), Swan River Myrtle, York Poison, Cowslip orchids, Common Spider-orchids, and more I can't remember. The main trees were Marri and Jarrah. Afterwards they took us out to a place where there was water lying in the paddocks, where swans and other birds were nesting. The swan families ranged from 2 or 3 day old fluffy cygnets to a family that was half grown. We tried to find the Green Kangaroo Paw which grows near the swampy area on the other side of the road, but we were much too early.

We spent a short time at Kings Park the next day, and again there were masses of Kangaroo Paw. We saw Rainbow Lorikeets there, too, the only ones we saw in the west.

We finally got to spend a day in the John Forrest National Park (only 10 km from where we stayed) when we'd been in Perth for over a week. In the

morning we walked down the track where the old railway brought trippers to the park, and crossed over Jane Brook and followed it back to the picnic ground. Because we were a fortnight earlier than when we were at the park in 1984, we saw many plants in flower that were finished then. Morning Iris was one flower that was at its best, but the different peas were the real show there, with a beautiful blue Holly-leaved Hovea being one of my favourites. Doug got the most enjoyment stalking a flock of White-tailed Black Cockatoos which were feeding in the Marris, getting the fine seed out of the large nuts with their strong beaks. They are another cockatoo whose head seems out of all proportion to the body. I'd broken my zoom lens at Kalbarri, so wasn't able to take advantage of the opportunity to get a good close-up photo of them. We were often within 40 or 50 metres of them. As we returned, almost paddling often, along the other side of the brook, we saw Scarlet Robins and Inland Thornbills, which I mistook for Wrens at first sighting, because of their habit of cocking their tail.

While we were having lunch we were joined by a party of Twenty-eights (Port Lincoln Ringnecks), a pair of Magpies, a very wary Australian Raven, a Mudlark and a pair of Black Ducks. The drake was confident enough to take bread gently from my fingers. The Twenty-eights squabbled and argued the whole time, and even had the Magpies bluffed.

After lunch (and a snooze in the car) on the walk to the dam, I was delighted to hear a terrific racket from the frogs in the creek. We climbed a bit higher up the hillside and took another path in the same direction as in the morning, and saw the W.A. Bird Orchid, *Pterostylis barbata*, similar to our plumed greenhood, *P. plumosa*. There were lots more Cowslip Orchids too, but we saw them everywhere. We saw one or two grass trees coming into flower on this track, too.

The other highlight for me was a day at Lake Bibra, about 18 km south of Perth, and surrounded by suburbs. I learned about it in my "Where to Find Birds in Australia", and as it was more easily accessible than Ploughman's swamp, we decided to go there. I'm glad we did, even though the lake was overflowing and parts of the walking track were under water. There were numerous species, from swamphens to grebes, from swans to silver gulls, Swamp Harrier to Red Wattle-birds (the note in my diary says 'numerous Red Wattle-birds, and they're just as much roughnecks here as at home'). I got a list of 33 birds, but there were quite a few I didn't manage to identify. We left the car on the track that was flooded and walked quite a distance under paperbarks and into the open. We saw our only Sacred Kingfisher for the trip here, as well as several other birds, before turning back, and relocating the car further around the lake, closer to the bird hide we'd seen earlier across the lake. There's a lot of plantings on this side, including *E. leucoxydon*, pink flowering form! Near the entrance where we had our lunch there's lots of bracken, and I could hear wrens, but not once did they appear long enough for me to get binoculars up to identify them.

We set off down the track (all concreted by the way) and saw Grey Fantails,

a pair of Western Rosellas (only saw 3 for the whole trip), Tree Martins, more Twenty-eights, Musk Duck, Hardhead, Western Gerygone, a Swamp Harrier and a family of Grey Teal, and finally came to the path that lead to the bird hide. After we'd gone about 200 m we realised we had a problem. The last 100 m of the path and walkway were about half a metre under water.

It was a lovely few hours and a beautiful spot. There are a number of lakes and swamps around the suburbs of Perth, but this one seems to be the most accessible.

Rita Mills.

## SANDON IN SEPTEMBER

Birds seen at the bird bath were

Wrens	Striated Thornbills	Silvereyes
White-throated Treecreeper (pair)		

Birds seen on the property, with dates indicating when first seen, were

Australasian Grebe	Welcome Swallow (pair)	Yellow-rumped Thornbills
Pacific Black Duck (pair)	Richard's Pipit	Varied Sittellas
Grey Teal (pair)	Bl-f Cuckoo-shrike (pr, 8/9)	Red Wattlebirds
Maned Duck (pair)	Hooded Robin (pair)	White-eared Honeyeaters
Little Eagle (pair)	Scarlet Robin (pair)	Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters
Brown Falcon	Jacky Winter	Fuscous Honeyeaters
Masked Lapwings (pair)	Golden Whistler - male+imm	White-naped Honeyeaters
Galahs	Rufous Whistler (pair, 8/9)	Yellow-faced Honeyeaters
Sulphur-crested Cockatoos	Grey Shrike-thrush	Spotted Pardalote
Crimson Rosella (pair)	Restless Flycatcher (pair)	Diamond Firetail
Eastern Rosellas (pair)	Grey Fantail (pair)	Olive-backed Oriole (16/9)
Pallid Cuckoo	Willie Wagtail	White-winged Choughs
Fan-tailed Cuckoo (5/9)	Speckled Warbler (pair)	Magpies
Horsefield's Bronze-cuckoo	Weebill	Grey Currawong (pair)
Shining Bronze-cuckoo (1/9)	Brown Thornbills	Australian Raven
Kookaburra (pair)	Buff-rumped Thornbills	

Susanna Starr.

## LAPWINGS

A pair of Lapwings has nested on Wilmer's dam at North Castlemaine on a small island. This happened once before on the dam opposite our place and we thought that this was another 'doomed' family, but Bob saw the family on the bank a day or two after the young ones had hatched. He was mystified as to how they had got there, and no one that he asked knew anything either - there were plenty of theories, but no one knew for sure.

Later he saw them back on the 'island', which after the rain, was reduced to little more than a stump on the top. One parent was on the stump with the chicks and the other was standing in the water. The next day they were all feeding on the bank again. He decided to try to find how they were

getting back and forth and set out that evening with a spotlight and video, but although he got a video of them, he did not solve the mystery.

Several evenings later a fox was seen crossing the lane, and later that night the parents set up their usual alarm, so it must have been down near the dam. It happened again a few nights later, but earlier in the evening, so Bob set out with spotlight to see what was going on. He found the chicks bobbing around in the water and the parents calling and attacking the fox. So - mystery solved! The young ones can swim.

Bob has since spoken to someone else, and she has seen the same thing happen when danger was about. When roosting the parents fly to the roost and the chicks follow on the water.

An interesting sidelight to this is a story from Bob's son who is truck-driving at the moment. On one of the freeways in N.S.W. there is a lapwing family happily ensconced on the nature strip in the middle of the road, with a couple of dead foxes on the roadside. He reckons they must feel pretty safe there!

Rita Mills

## **OBSERVATIONS**

**YELLOW THORNBILLS** have been abundant in Campbell St. (KT)

**PIED CURRAWONGS AND GANG GANGS AT TRENTHAM.** Numerous noisy Pied Currawongs have been seen at Trentham, near the tip, some producing a wailing call. A pair of Gang Gang Cockatoos has also been seen. Gang Gangs are seen from time to time at Trentham, apparently crossing the town when moving from one patch of bushland to another. Sometimes a flock of 7 is seen. (SB)

**GREY CURRAWONGS NESTING AT SANDON,** The nest is in the garden close to the house, at first breaking sticks for the nest, and then using finer material. (SS)

**HANED DUCK** has been on Barkers Ck, near the Campbell's Ck junction. (EG)

**SILVER EYES IN KYNETON TOWNSHIP.** The silver eyes have been seen in the garden. Not seen here previously. (KM)

**BOOBIES IN BOTANIC GARDENS.** A pair were observed roosting in the gardens. A search next day located only a single bird. (SP) The bird was still present on 16 Oct. (CFNC members).

**BLACK AND WHITE BLACKBIRD** has been seen along Barkers Creek, near Thomas St. It has the call and beak colour of a typical blackbird, but has white patches. (MW) Part albino blackbirds have been recorded in Melbourne. (CS)

**BLUE-WINGED PARROT AT LORNE.** The parrot was near George River, and unconcerned about being watched, displayed on a gate. (KT)

COLLARED SPARROWHAWK was seen flying over Bendigo Library on 15 Oct.

BABY YELLOW THORNBILLS were seen on a Cootamundra Wattle at Harcourt. According to the *Complete Book of Australian Birds* "In some districts the Yellow Thornbill seems to have a great liking for acacias, not normally favourites with thornbills." (BC)

INDIAN MYNAHS AT HARCOURT. Two were seen in the township. (BC)

RED SPIDER ORCHIDS. In some localities they are abundant, where formerly they have been seen in small numbers and then only in some years. (SP)

LEAFY TEMPLETONIA. Additional plants of this rare and endangered species were found in the botanic gardens during the Cape Broom pull. (EP)

SKYLARK was seen near Clydesdale along the Guildford-Newstead road, during the survey of the Maryborough railway line. This bird has not previously been included in the Club's bird list.

WHITEFACE FLOCK with 8-10 birds was seen near Cairn Curran. (KT)

LITTLE RAVENS. A flock comprising many hundreds of birds was seen at Muckleford, near the railway line. (GB)

## FROM THE COMMITTEE

RAILWAY RESERVES. We have been asked by Dept Conservation and Environment to give information about railway lines with rare or significant plants or plant communities. Lines of concern to this club are the lines to Maldon and Shelbourne, to Elphinstone and Taradale, to Bendigo and to Maryborough (as far as Cairn Curran). If you have information about these lines please give it to E. Perkins.

METCALFE SHIRE DRAFT ROADSIDE REPORT has been received by the Club. Contact G. Broadway if you would like to read the report. Comments about the report are invited.

VICWATCH. VICWATCH is being organised by the Office of the Environment. "Those of us who have been involved in environmental monitoring know that it is a wonderful way of learning about the environment. Not only does it provide early warning system of local environmental change, it can also help identify priorities for environmental action and provide an objective check on progress in setting things right."

"The VICWATCH program supports community initiatives in environmental monitoring through a grant scheme funded by the Office of the Environment. Later this year we'll be publishing a directory of Community Environmental Monitoring Programs"

"Your experience may be a source of inspiration for those who are just starting out and want to avoid 'reinventing the wheel'"

Should we take part in the monitoring program? If so, what?

Some suggestions

-monitoring of butterfly populations in the botanic gardens.

-monitoring of Veldt Grass in the botanic gardens.

-monitoring of spread of Shell Grass into local bushland.

-spread of Cape Broom along local roadsides.

Do you have suggestions?

**WALKING TRAILS.** The Club is supporting establishment of walking trails between Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh, Daylesford and Castlemaine.

**REPORT ON THE CONSERVATION VALUE OF ROADSIDES IN THE SHIRE OF MALDON** has been received. Contact B Maund if you would like to read this report.

### **WHAT BIRDCALL IS THAT?**

This bird call identification kit is available from the town library. It contains two 60-minute audio cassettes with bird calls from the sound library of CSIRO. 75 of the more conspicuous birds of the east coast are included. An accompanying booklet describes and illustrates the birds.

The birds included are "arranged in descending sequence of familiarity, progressing outward from the urban centre to the countryside". This is

House Sparrow	Silvereye	Restless flycatcher	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Common Starling	Silver Gull	Noisy Miner	Olive-backed Oriole
Spotted Turtledove	Australasian Grebe	White-winged Chough	Eastern Yellow Robin
Australian Raven	Black Swan	Grey Butcherbird	Sulphur-crest Cockatoo
Indian Mynah	Black Duck	Little Wattlebird	King Parrot
Willie Wagtail	Musk Duck	New Holland H' eater	Fan Tailed Cuckoo
Welcome Swallow	Dusky Moorhen	Superb Fairywren	Lewins Honeyeater
Blackbird	Clamor's Reed Warbler	Eastern Spinebill	Golden Whistler
Magpie	Black-winged Stilt	Boobook Owl	Eastern Whipbird
Pied Currawong	Whistling Kite	Common Koel	Black-faced Monarch
Magpie Lark	Galah	Tawny Frogmouth	White-th Treecreeper
Figbird	Stubble Quail	Pallid Cuckoo	Wonga Pigeon
Rainbow Lorikeet	Masked Lapwing	Sacred Kingfisher	Yellow-t Black Cockatoo
Kookaburra	Skylark	Rufous Whistler	Crescent Honeyeater
Dollarbird	Yellow-rump Thornbill	Red Wattlebird	Cicadabird
Spotted Pardalote	Peaceful Dove	Grey Shrikethrush	Crimson Rosella
Black-f Cuckooshr	Eastern Rosella	Wh-throated Warbler	Leaden Flycatcher
Bulbul	Jacky Winter	Noisy Priarbird	Bell Miner
Spangled Drongo	Rufous Songlark	Yellow-f Honeyeater	Superb Lyrebird

Some of our common birds, and most of our honeyeaters are not included.

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**MEETINGS:** Second Friday of each month (Jan excepted) at Castlemaine High School (Lawson Hall) at 8.00 p.m. Business meetings on the fourth Thursday

## **CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM**

Sat 31 Oct. **KALIMNA WALK.** Festival program. 10.00 am. Meet at Kalimna Walking Trail, starting from the tourist road, 1.5 km from Lyttleton St.

Wed 4 Nov. **KAWEKA WALK.** Kaweka Committee tour. 6.30 pm. Turner Street.

Sat 7 Nov. **KALIMNA WALK.** Festival program. 2.00 pm. Meet at Kalimna Walking Trail, starting from the tourist road, 1.5 km from Lyttleton St.

Sun 8 Nov. **KAWEKA WALK.** Kaweka Committee tour. 4.00 pm. Turner Street.

Fri 13 Nov. **FLOWERS, FEATHERS AND FUN.** Ramblings here and abroad. Speaker is Reg Johnson. High School at 8.00 pm.

Fri 14 Nov. **METCALFE FOREST.** Wildflower excursion. Meet SEC at 1.30 pm. Continue to Turpins Falls. Leader is E. Perkins.

Thurs 22 Oct. **BUSINESS MEETING** 7.30 pm at 38 Campbell Street.

Thurs 19 Nov. **THURSDAY EXCURSION.** Joint CFNC/U3A birdwatching excursion to Tullaroop Reservoir. 9.30 start. Meet Continuing Education car park, Templeton St at 9.30 am. Take lunch.

Fri 11 Dec. **MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT** 8 pm at High School. Members are invited to provide a short item for the program, and bring a plate.

Sat 12 Dec. **TANG TANG SWAMP.** Leave SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30 pm, or Wesley St Nursery, Kangaroo Flat at 2.15 pm. Route via Eaglehawk Town Hall and Dingee. Take tea and afternoon tea. Leader: G Sitch.

Thurs 17 Dec. **THURSDAY BIRDWATCHING BREAKFAST.** CFNC/U3A bird-watching excursion. Meet outside Cont Ed., Templeton St at 7.00 am. Take your binoculars and breakfast.

Thurs 21 Jan. **DAWN BREAKFAST AT KALIMNA.** Meet at Kalimna Point car park, a few hundred metres north of Lyttleton St, half an hour before sunrise. You will need to consult the news or newspaper for sunrise time. We will observe sunrise from the rise to the east of the road.

Fri 12 FEB. **WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MEANDER** with Rita Mills. Annual meeting.

Sat 6 - Mon 8 March. **TIMBOON CAMPOUT.** Combined WVFNCA and VFNCA campout at "Kangarooie", Princetown. Program includes Great Ocean Road, Mutton Birds, Glow Worms, Rain Forest. Scenic Drives, Wildflowers and Bird watching. Conducted by Timboon F.N.C. Further details from E. Perkins.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club inc. PO Box 324, Castlemaine 3450.