

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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OWL REPORT

The Southern Boobook continues his solitary day-time existence in the usual roosting spot, although his occasional absence seems to indicate that there is an alternative site. The second owl has not been seen since early September, when the pair were observed perched close together on the same branch, and a breeding call was heard (at 10 a.m.!) as we left the area. The call was identified from a tape made by W. Flentje.* If mating was successful they are probably busy with rearing the young at this stage. Otherwise they will each go their separate ways until April/May next year.

This pair of owls may have made scientific history. The discovery that their discarded food pellets have contained the remains of at least three different species of bats - unidentified to date - and the fact that it has not been previously been recognised that bats were part of their diet, gives rise to speculation on just how they are captured. On the wing perhaps, or as they emerge from their roosting hollows? Maybe on rare occasions on which they land on the ground. In any case, a considerable achievement for these smallest members of the hawk-owl family.

More information will be available at a later date for those who are interested in the habits of these fascinating birds. S.P.

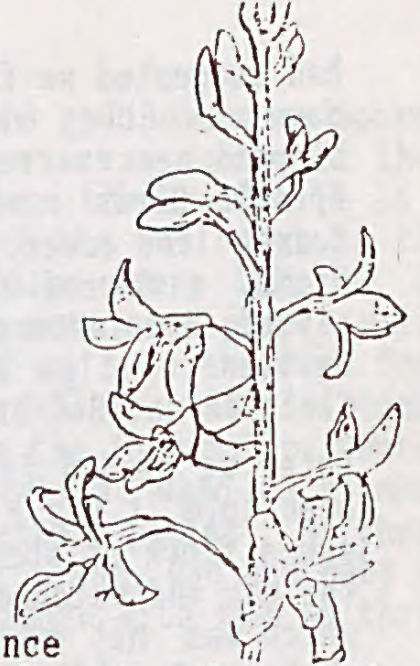
* "Night Sounds of the Forest"

HOLIDAY IN N.S.W.

Gadding again. Doug decided to take the rest of his holidays in N.S.W. as he'd seen a program on "Holiday" about Carcoar (Cah-caw in imitation of a "crow" according to the locals), a historical township south of Bathurst. It was the second settlement over the Blue Mountains after Bathurst. Planned as a main rural centre it was passed by and was destined to become a National Trust Historical Village. Well worth a visit.

From there we decided to go to Coonabarabran for 3 nights and stayed 5. The Warrumbungles Mountain Motel is my idea of the ideal motel - extensive grounds with plenty of wildflowers, the young Castlereagh River flowing at the bottom of the flat and tree covered hills across it, plenty of room in the unit and our own cooking facilities. The other side of the road wasn't my ideal though - a Dinosaur Park, with a resident, free-flying cockatoo - but more of him later.

The next day, as we had to move into the other unit in the morning, we decided that we'd just go out to the Pilliga for a while. After talking to one of the rangers we headed out to Baradine, which is a pretty, well-kept town with a flower garden down the centre of the main street. The ranger



had suggested we follow one of the marked trails out as far as one of the dams, but Doug wasn't too impressed with the sandy road surface so we stopped near a creek crossing instead, had lunch listening to a family of Apostle Birds - which we didn't manage to sight - and afterwards walked down to the creek. There were a lot of birds there including Superb Blue Wrens, a Sacred Kingfisher, Mallee Ringnecks, Noisy Friarbirds, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Rufous Whistlers, a Western Warbler, White-backed Swallows, Yellow and Buff-rumped Thornbills, Grey Shrike-thrushes, Grey Fantails and Red-browed Finches.

Later we headed for Butlers Lane off the road back to Coonabarabran. We'd been told it was a good area for birds, and as we turned into the lane we saw a flock of about 20 Double-barred Finches, a first for me. We sat in the car and watched them for several minutes. A bit further down the lane, which was not much more than a cart track, we saw juvenile Diamond Doves, while on Bugaldie Creek - we couldn't go any further - we added White Cockatoos, Bar-shouldered Doves, White-throated Tree-creepers, Yellow Robins, Little Lorikeets, Mistletoe Birds, and a Pied Butcherbird to the list.

On our other day at the Pilliga we headed towards Narrabri, then turned off on a side road into the scrub. The ranger had told us to take the track just after the Walking Trail sign. The trouble was, he, and we, didn't realise the sign had actually been taken down for the weeks when the trail is closed because there is a pair of Peregrine Falcons nesting there at that time of year. However, the track we picked was an interesting one. We stopped just off the road and walked down the track. There were plenty of birds, especially Noisy Friarbirds, and Thornbills. At a puddle where we had disturbed a 1.5m Lace Monitor earlier we watched Spotted Pardalotes and Brown-headed Honeyeaters bathing.

We went to the Warrumbungles on two different days. The first day was to the Fans Horizon Walk, but we decided when we got to the car park, which was also the one to the Grand High Tops and Breadknife, that we would do that walk after all. I was well prepared in case we should change our minds, and so we set off to the calls of Bar-shouldered Doves, thornbills, pardalotes, Noisy Friarbirds and wrens. As we followed Spirey Creek we saw quite a few more birds, including lots of Brown Tree-creepers, also King Parrots, which I didn't expect to see, Crimson Rosellas, Jacky Winters, Silvereyes, Redbrows, Yellow Thornbills, a young Grey Butcherbird and Grey Fantails. The walking for the first 3 km or so was quite easy, especially where the new path is being formed. There's even a couple of footbridges now, though further up the creek we still had to use stepping stones.

As the track swung round towards the Breadknife we started to climb, but I was still able to enjoy the several wattles, hardenbergia, peas, including a pink flowering one, buttercups, a very showy guinea flower and one with very hairy leaves and stems, love creeper and the big Angophoras (Rough-barked Apple, despite the fact I was starting to puff! I saw few orchids at first, but I think that might have been because I was mainly looking up, not down, because on the way back I saw quite a number including Greencomb Spider-orchids, Waxlips, Pink Fingers, *Pterostylis curta* and *P. mutica*, and a plain yellow *Diuris* species.

We had lunch and a rest looking up at the Breadknife and Beloungery Spire. The spire is a very impressive volcanic plug - there are a number of them in the park - which is popular with rock-climbers, and the Breadknife is a dyke. When we felt strong enough we set off up past the wall next to the Breadknife to the High Tops, stopping to puff and blow every 100, 50, 30 metres or so, but we made it to the spot where we'd seen some people while we were having our lunch. It was a very steep pinch up onto the High Tops but it was well worth it with views down over the Breadknife, and Beloungery Spire, out through the gap to the little plain where the Information Centre is and Beloungery Split Rock, and in the other direction, when we climbed the extra few feet right to the top, out over the western plains. Up there we caught up with a family who had passed us earlier - Mum, Dad and baby in a carrier on Dad's back. They were having a late lunch with two or three Pied Currawongs hanging around trying to scavenge.

We took the track, the short cut, down behind the Breadknife instead of taking the one down West Spirey Creek, and it was very impressive being under that towering wall as we got further down. Near the bottom, not far from where we went back onto the original track, we came across Balor Hut where it's possible to stay. Its very basic, but would be rather fun for a night or two, but even away up there it had been vandalised. We got back to the car about 4 o'clock after about 6 hours on the track.

Our next Warrumbungle outing was to Burbie Canyon, leaving from Camp Wambalong Car Park, and taking the vehicular track to come to the "back end" of the track and walk in the opposite direction from last time. We walked down next to Beloungery Split Rock, looking up at the caves in the cliffs and wondering if any raptors were nesting there, but I couldn't see any signs that they were.

We walked down the track past some really beautiful wattles with long catkin like flowers, and I finally found that they are Currawang. I didn't add many birds to my list, but we watched, from a distance of about 3 metres, a young Striated Thornbill being fed. We saw quite a number of flowers, including Austral Bugle, a swainsonia, a boronia, lots of Pink Fingers, Tiny Greenhoods, a few Scented Sun-orchids, Indigofera, Rough Mintbush, Native Flax and a beautiful Wonga Vine as we got back onto the main road. The Burbie Canyon track is a beautiful spot, and at the right time of day is an excellent bird spot. There are groves of Casuarinas, grass trees, angophoras and numbers of eucalypts that I didn't even try to identify. At the base of one of the rocks near the "canyon" itself I found a host of *P. curta*, and have at last got a slide with which I am satisfied.

On the way back to the motel we decided to stop at Whitegum Lookout for afternoon tea. It's a really good introduction to the area, but best of all, it is a paved and labelled track, not very long, and ideal for wheel-chairs or folk who haven't time or ability to do some of the long walks. From there it is possible to see a number of the more interesting features of the mountains.

There were masses of *P. mutica*, the Tiny Greenhood, in the grounds of the motel, so early one morning I decided to try again to get a decent slide of one. I didn't count on the "help" from the aforementioned cockatoo. Cocky

often came over to play with the motel pup or talk to the many children staying at the motel, and as I decided on a good patch of orchids he came over to investigate, pulling at the camera straps, frightening some small children who'd come to see him, and generally being a pest. When I finally decided on the orchid I wanted he had wandered a few feet away so I set up the camera, sighted through the lens, again got myself comfortable, again sighted through the lens - and the orchid had completely disappeared. I looked up to see Cocky enjoying it for breakfast!

For the last of the holidays we stayed at Gloucester and Sydney. Gloucester I would love to visit again. Its not far from Barrington Tops, and we spent some hours doing a walking track called the Hidden Treasure track at Copeland Tops about 20 km from Gloucester. There were some huge trees that we finally discovered were the Giant Stinging Trees that we were warned about. We also saw a Red Cedar. There was some labelling along the track, hence our knowledge! I also saw lots of ferns growing high in the trees, and a solitary Rock Orchid, which I tried photographing, as it was right on the edge of the track. We heard a Whip-bird, a Lyrebird, Crested Bell-bird and Bell Miners, and saw a Blackfaced Monarch and Yellow Throated Scrubwren as well as the more familiar Grey Shrike-thrushes, Rufous and Golden Whistlers, White Throated Tree-creepers, Sittellas, Fantail Cuckoo and Pied Currawongs. There were several little birds I could not identify, despite book and binoculars.

We also spent a day at Forster, and there on Cape Hawke we saw two male Regent Bower Birds and their families. On the way back at a place called Kranback we added White-headed Pigeons to the list. When I arrived at the Caravan park I told the owner of seeing the Regent Bowerbirds to be told that they actually had Satin Bowerbirds in the park, but they were hard to see because of the number of children around during school holidays, but I got up early next morning and eventually found the female and immatures a short distance from the cabin we were staying in. Next morning about 5.30 I also briefly saw the male. They disappeared over the river about 7 am when the children got out of bed!

I wasn't looking forward to our stay in Sydney, but discovered from Doug's collector friend that instead of staying around the house while they talked I could go up to the end of the street, down the long set of steps and onto a walking track through the Sydney National Park, and to Toronga Park Zoo. So my stay in Sydney was most enjoyable after all. The track is mainly on low cliffs above the water, and there were lots of flowers out, including *Erica longifolia*. I saw several water dragons on the track and one at the zoo, which I photographed. They're quite impressive, and because they are used to seeing people, didn't disappear as quickly as they normally do.

As we approached home over the next couple of days it got wetter and wetter - quite a come-down after the lovely warm weather we'd enjoyed - and if we'd left it a few hours more, we wouldn't have got home that day, as it was the lead-up to the floods in the north-east. The cafe where we had our afternoon tea was shown on television next day with about 45 cm of water running through it!

R Mills.

SANDON IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 1993

ND Australasian Grebe (pr)	ND Welcome Swallows	ND Varied Sittellas
N Little Pied Cormorant	ND Richard's Pipit (pair)	ND Wh-thr'd Treecreepers (pr)
N Little Bl Cormorant (pr)	ND Bl-f Cuckoo-shrike (pr)	ND Red Wattlebird (pair)
ND White-faced Heron (pair)	ND Scarlet Robin (pair)	ND Yellow-f Honeyeater (pr)
ND Pacific Black Duck (pr)	N Eastern Yellow Robin	ND Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters
ND Little Eagle	ND Jacky Winter (pair)	ND White-plumed Honeyeaters
ND Brown Falcon (pair)	N Crested Shrike-tit	ND Brown-headed Honeyeaters
ND Masked Lapwing (pair)	ND Rufous Whistler	D Mistletoe Bird
ND Galahs	ND Grey -thrush (pr)	ND Spotted Pardalotes
D Long-billed Corellas	ND Grey Fantail	ND Striated Pardalotes
N Sulphur-crested Cockatoos	ND Willie Wagtail (pair)	ND Silvereyes
ND Crimson Rosellas	ND Wrens	N European Goldfinch (pr)
ND Eastern Rosella (pair)	ND Speckled Warbler (pair)	ND Red-browed Firetails
ND Red-rumped Parrot (pair)	ND Weebills	ND Diamond Firetails
N Pallid Cuckoo	ND Brown Thornbills	N Olive-backed Orioles (h)
ND Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	ND Buff-rumped Thornbills	ND White-winged Choughs
ND Shining Bronze-cuckoo	ND Yellow-rumped Thornbill	ND Australian Magpie-lark
N Southern Boobook Owl (h)	D Yellow Thornbill	ND Magpies
ND Owlet Nightjar (heard)	ND Striated Thornbills	ND Grey Currawong
ND Kookaburra (pair)	D Southern Whitefaces	ND Australian Ravens

N = recorded for November; D = recorded for December

Nesting Activity

Australasian Grebe nesting in Cumbungi, and had 2 chicks by 20/12. (5 chicks last year)

Masked Lapwings appeared with one chick mid-November

Kookaburra pair seen with two young late December.

Richard's pipit nesting on ground under tussock 18 Nov. 2 eggs.

Grey Shrike-thrush nesting in centre of Hedge wattle, 1 metre up. Nov 5.

Wrens nesting 12/11 in low pultenaea. Also nesting seen 20/12 in nest in Hardenbergia by house.

Weebills nesting 12/11 in young Grey Box.

White-throated Treecreepers - group of 4 inspecting our nest boxes in mid-November, regularly for 2 weeks - no takers.

Yellow-faced Honeyeaters nesting one metre up stone pine 29/11. 3 eggs.

European Goldfinch nesting 19/11 at top of 3 metre Stone Pine.

Red-browed Firetail nestbuilding in Stone Pine 10/12.

Animals

Brushtail Possum in horizontal 15 cm log box on 20/11 and 21/11.

Ringtailed Possum 25 and 26/11 in 10 cm vertical box; with baby on 29/12.

Yellow-footed Antichinus seen at 9.00 am 29/12, 6.00 pm 30/12.

Echidna in hole at base of *eucalypt* 17/12 and again further west on 21/12.

Red-bellied Black Snake enjoying itself in the dam 22/11.

Susanna Starr

BIRD LIST FOR 61 HUNTER ST - DEC/JAN

Bronzewing Pigeons were seen feeding on the *Allocasuarina pusilla* on the nature strip

Yellow-winged Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebills (with juveniles), Red Wattlebirds and New Holland Honeyeaters were seen feeding on *Callistemon saligna* and Red Hot Pokers in the garden. Other birds were

Crimson Rosellas	Blackbirds	Mistletoe Birds	Magpies
Eastern Rosellas	Superb Blue Wrens	Goldfinches	Aust Ravens
Kookaburras	Thornbills	Sparrows	
Little Lorikeets	Weebills	Grey Currawong feed-	
Rufous Whistler	Silver Eyes	ing a juvenile)	S.P.

BRISBANE RANGES NATIONAL PARK

Hosted by F.N. friends living at Anglesea, we were taken into the local coastal reserve areas where specific native orchids and plants were to be found. This area had in recent times undergone controlled burn and as a consequence the understory was sparse.

The following day we visited Steiglitz and our companions accompanied us on our walks in the Brisbane Ranges National park. Specifically we were taken to Saw Pit Gully Track, Wildflower Track and Aqueduct Track, to introduce us to a small section of the National Park.

Plants identified during the two days in the areas indicate the rewards when in the company of dedicated field naturalists.

N.B. Trish spied the Koala while endeavouring to trace a bird call (of a Rufous Whistler).

BRISBANE RANGES ORCHID LIST

Caladenia carnea Pink Fingers
Caladenia clavigera Plain-lip Caladenia
Caladenia tentaculata Greencomb
Caleana major Duck Orchid
Diuris sulphurea Tiger Orchid
Microtis unifolia Onion Orchid
Pterostylis curta Blunt Greenhood
Pterostylis nutans (finished flowering)
Thelymitra ixioides Spotted Sun-orchid
Thelymitra rubra Salmon Sun-orchid

BRISBANE RANGES PLANT LIST

Acacia aculeatissima Thin-leaf Wattle
Acacia myrtifolia Myrtle-leaf Wattle
Acacia paradoxa Hedge Wattle
Argentipallium obtusifolium Blunt e/last
Arthropodium strictum Chocolate Lily
Banksia marginata Silver Banksia
Brachyscome multifida Cut-leaf Daisy
Brunonia australis Austral Pincushion
Burchardia umbellata Milkmaids
Chrysocelphalum apiculatum Common e/lasting
Correa reflexa Common Correa
Dianella revoluta Black-anther Flax-lily
Drosera sp Sundew

ANGLESEA ORCHID LIST

Caladenia cardiochila Thick-lip Spider o'd
Caladenia clavigera Plain-lip Caladenia
Caladenia menziesii Hare Orchid
Caladenia tentaculata Greencomb
Caleana major Duck Orchid
Calochilus robertsonii Beard-orchid
Calochilus imberbis Naked Beard-orchid
Lyperanthus nigricans Brown Beaks
Microtis unifolia Onion Orchid
Thelymitra spp Sun Orchids

ANGLESEA PLANT LIST

Goodenia geniculata Bent Goodenia
Grevillea steiglitziana Steiglitz Grev.
Hakea affin sericea Silky Hakea
Helichrysum bracteatum Golden Everlasting
Hibbertia stricta Erect Guineaflower
Hypericum gramineum Small St John's Wort
Kennedia prostrata Running Postman
Lomandra filiformis Wattle Mat-rush
Lomandra micrantha Small-flower Mat-rush
Microseris sp Yam Daisy
Ozothamnus obcordata Grey everlasting
Pimelea humilis Small Riceflower
Pomaderris sp

<i>Pultenaea daphnoides</i> Large-leaf Bush-pea	<i>Helichrysum scorpioides</i> Button Everlasting
<i>Pultenaea pedunculata</i> Matted Bush-pea	<i>Hibbertia sericea</i> Silky Guinea-flower
<i>Pultenaea scabra</i> Rough Bush-pea	<i>Leptospermum continentale</i> Prickly Tea-tree
<i>Lindsaea linearis</i> Screw Fern	<i>Leptospermum myrsinoides</i> Silky Tea-tree
<i>Thysanotus tuberosus</i> Common Fringe-lily	<i>Lobelia rhombifolia</i> Branched Lobelia
<i>Veronica gracilis</i> Slender Speedwell	<i>Patersonia fragilis</i> Short Purple-flag
<i>Wahlenbergia sp</i> Bluebells	<i>Patersonia occidentalis</i> Long Purple-flag
<i>Arthropodium strictum</i> Chocolate lily	<i>Pimelea humilis</i> Small Rice-flower
<i>Burchardia umbellata</i> Milkmaids	<i>Pimelea linifolia</i> Slender Rice-flower
<i>Brunonia australis</i> Austral Pincushion	<i>Pimelea octophylla</i> Woolly Rice-flower
<i>Calythrix tetragona</i> Common Fringe-myrtle	<i>Poranthera microphylla</i> Small Poranthera
<i>Comesperma calymega</i> Spike Milk-wort	<i>Spyridium parvifolium</i> Dusty Miller
<i>Conospermum mitchellii</i> Mountain Conosperm	<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i> Candles
<i>Cynoglossum suaveolens</i> Sweet Hounds-tongue	<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i> Grass Triggerplant
<i>Dillwynia sericea</i> Showy Parrot-pea	<i>Thysanotus tuberosus</i> Common Fringe-lily
<i>Epacris impressa</i> Common Heath	<i>Wahlenbergia gracilis</i> Bluebell
<i>Gompholobium ecostatum</i> Downy Wedge-pea	<i>Xanthorrhoea australis</i> Austral Grass-tree
<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i> Common Raspwort	<i>Xanthorrhoea minor</i> Small Grass-tree
<i>Goodenia geniculata</i> Bent Goodenia	

TA/WH.

BIRD LIST FOR BELL'S SWAMP

Visit on 21-11-93, between 4.00 pm and 5.15 pm. B = evidence of breeding.

Hoary-headed Grebe	Dusky Moorhen [B]	Fairy Martin
White-faced Heron	Masked Lapwing	Willie Wagtail
Pacific Heron	Whistling Kite [B]	Restless Flycatcher
Straw-necked Ibis	Black-shouldered Kite	Superb Fairy Wren
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Little Corella	Brown Treecreeper
Little Pied Cormorant	Long-billed Corella	Red Wattlebird
Black Swan [B]	Galah	White-plumed Honeyeater
Black Duck [B]	Red-rumped Parrot	House Sparrow
White-eyed Duck	Sacred Kingfisher	Dusky Woodsallow [B]
Australian Shoveller	Kookaburra	Magpie-lark
Musk Duck	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Magpie
Coot [B]	Welcome Swallow	Australian Raven

P. West.

OBSERVATIONS

Hyacinth Orchids were in flower at Sandon 25/12. SS.

Tall Lobelia seen in flower in Muckleford Forest 31/12. SS.

Blue-billed Duck seen on Jan 12, 1994 at Lake Wendouree, Ballarat, diving in long reeds at the edge of the lake opposite the botanic gardens. SP

Brown Snake was killed by a car, in Gaulton Street. MO.

PLATYPOUS have again been seen in the town, in Barkers Creek. Six were seen in the Loddon River at Guildford.

SPIDER BOOKS. can be purchased from George Broadway for \$8.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Excursions leave promptly at the times indicated.

Frid 11 Feb. TASMANIA. George Broadway. Lawson Hall. Castlemaine Secondary College (the former high school) at 8.00 pm. This is the annual meeting.

Sat 12 Feb. HAMILTONS CROSSING AND BELLS SWAMP.. Leave SEC, Mostyn St. Departure time to be arranged at meeting, and will depend on likely weather conditions.

Thurs 18 Feb BIRDWATCHING. Combined U3A/CFNC outing. Meet Cont Ed carpark, Templeton St at 9.30 am. Leader: K Turner.

Sat 26 Feb. REMNANTS OF BASALT VEGETATION AND THEIR CONSERVATION Speaker is Dr Jim Willis. Arranged by Friends of Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Gillies St, Ballarat. Further information, booking details from E. Perkins.

Fri 11 March. REMNANT BUSHLAND AND ITS PROTECTION Speaker is Mr Bill Middleton. 8.00 pm at Castlemaine Secondary College.

Sat 12 Mar. WALK IN MT ALEXANDER. Meet SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30 pm.

Fri 11 - 14 Mar. VFNCA ANNUAL CAMPOUT Hosted by Latrobe Valley and Central Gippsland FNC. See December newsletter for program etc.

Thurs 18 Mar BIRDWATCHING. Combined U3A/CFNC outing. Meet Cont Ed carpark, Templeton St at 9.30 am. Leader: G Broadway.

Fri 8 April. ISLANDS AND SEABIRDS. Speaker is Mr Mike Carter.

Fri 10 June WESTERN AUSTRALIA. Speaker is Winston Huggins.

Fri 8 July. FOUR SEASONS IN HAMPSHIRE

Fri 9 Sept. NORTHERN AUSTRALIA Speaker is Pat Bingham

Committee: B Maund (Pres), B Envall (VP), M Oliver (Sec), G Broadway (Treas), K Turner (Prog), R Mills (PO & asst N/L), E. Perkins (N/L ed), S Parnaby, C Morris and K Meehan.

Meetings: Second Friday of each month (Jan excepted) at Castlemaine High School at 8.00 p.m. Business meetings on the fourth Thursday (Dec excepted) at 7.30 p.m. All members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions 1994. These will be set at the annual meeting. The committee recommends a general increase to

Ordinary membership:	Single \$14	Family \$20
Pensioner/student:	Single \$10	Family \$16
Supporting:	\$25.	
Newsletter:	Membership + \$6.	

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club inc. P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450.