

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

October 1992

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MYALL LAKES NATIONAL PARK
July 1992 Part 2



Topknot
Pigeon

Travelling north from Hawke's Nest towards Seal Rocks (recently in the news when a large number of whales were stranded there) the road runs between the beach and lakes for about 20 km to an area of walking tracks and camping sites known as Mungo Brush, on the shores of the Broadwater - one of the largest of the lakes. The small patches of rainforest in this region consist of Cabbage Tree Palms (*Livingstonia australis*), figs, Stinging Trees and a dense understory of vines and shrubs. We heard a Bower Bird foraging in the undergrowth on this occasion, and a pair of White-breasted Sea Eagles hunted over lake and forest. Ancient melaleucas and flame trees around the camping ground were beginning to flower, and will soon be a riot of colour and noise as the flocks of Rainbow and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets move in to compete with many honeyeaters.

During July to October along the nearby Tamboi Track, the palms are festooned with large grape-like bunches of purple-black fruit, and these are the main source of food for the large hawk-like Top-knot Pigeons. They lead a nomadic existence from one patch of palms to another, down the east coast of the continent, from Cape York to Bergamui.

Development means that the *Livingstonia* palms are fast disappearing except in the few national parks, which in turn means the pigeons may be threatened by extinction. On my last visit in October 1991, there were only one or two pairs rather than the usual flocks of 10-20 birds, and it was depressing to find on this occasion, although there was an abundance of fruit, no pigeons were to be seen.

S.P.

THE MAGNIFICENT TREES

"This superbly illustrated book amounts to a world tour of the most magnificent creatures on earth...." Quotation from Stirling Macoboy's 'What Tree is That'

Now I must admit that I had never really thought of trees as creatures

before. To clarify things somewhat I referred to the trusty Dictionary:-

Creature n. created thing; animate being etc.

If you can live with the idea that any created thing is a creature then the definition is correct. Most magnificent? Certainly. I can't think of any animal more magnificent, and if man was God's greatest creation, (according to some), to my mind we are a pretty poor second especially when I see some of the specimens walking around town these days. Not only magnificent, but essential. Including all plants, nothing else would be here without them. All life directly or indirectly depends on plants. The world would still be bare rock and dust without plant life.

I am fortunate enough to share 13 acres with some of these magnificent creatures, in the guise of River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). They were here long before me and will be here long after I am gone. They are the occupiers of the land. With their smooth shaft-like trunks soaring to 30 m or more they are also home to a multitude of smaller animals. And those trunks! In colours from the palest grey through cream to black on the persistent bark at the base, they are a constant source of inspiration. I am rather partial to the specimens which have several stems from ground level or that branch from low on the trunk. To accommodate this vast mass the branches must grow away from each other, thereby creating the most wonderful flowing forms.

I know branches are likely to drop without warning, but the house is well away from them. Our little water-course would be much poorer without them. I feel very guilty when I remove the thousands of seedlings which like to come up in our garden, disturbed soil is very much to their liking. The way they flower most summers means there will be plenty more to come and we leave saplings in positions that are more acceptable to us. We humans like to modify our surroundings don't we?

Geoff Sitch.

KALBARRI AND ENNEALBA

[Our Newsletter Editor, on special assignment for the Castlemaine Naturalist in the far west, has filed her second report.]

Kalbarri was a bit of a shock, as I'd forgotten I'd heard there had been a big fire there last year. On the way out to Top Bend on the Murchison a couple of days later we stopped to have a look at some of the burnt area and found that there were lots of banksia seedlings and a lot of plants sprouting from the base. There were a couple of clumps of iris which were in bud, and quite a few other herbs that were sprouting.

We spent nearly 3 hours down on the river below Nature's Window. Last time we were there the river was running clear. This time it was up and

full of silt. There were lots of pink, white and yellow daisies - a lot of the yellow were Cape Weed - and masses of goodenias. We saw a young Hobby and parent down there, and also White-backed Swallows, nesting Tree Martins, Galahs, Port Lincoln Ringnecks, Mudlarks (nesting), and a pair of Nankeen Kestrels rising and soaring on the thermals off the cliffs.

We had lunch on a ledge of rock about 10 feet above the river, and while we ate we watched goats under overhangs at the top of cliffs, sheltering from the warm mid-day sun. The cliffs have lots of ledges and there are quite big areas of big smooth boulders in the river bed. At one place a piece of the cliff had fallen fairly recently, and one slab had landed on our side of the river on the area of small boulders.

We tried walking back amongst the peas which were almost small trees, certainly large shrubs, but we found that there were just too many Jewell and Nephilla spider webs between them, so we went down along the river bank again, and I began to realise that the river was down by at least a foot from when we went down there a couple of hours before.

We decided that, despite the fact we were tired, and the road pretty awful - we'd go to the Z bend. We'd never been there before and were surprised to find how different the area is. It is quite a deep gorge. There is far different vegetation - taller and more varied shrubs and quite a lot more birds - but they were harder to see. There's a good path down to the edge of the gorge. I think we could have even gone down into the gorge itself but we felt we'd had enough exercise by then. Another reason we were glad we went that way was that we found a young and very colourful Thorny Devil on the road.

We also visited the Kalflora Nursery and Flora Reserve. There is a walking track with labelled plants and also bits of interesting information about some of the fauna. There were lots of Kangaroo and Cat's Paws, as well as a lot of plants we were too late to see last time. About halfway I spotted a Southern Scrub Robin on the path ahead of us. It disappeared under the shrubs, but appeared again just near me as it settled on its nest. We tried a couple of slides, so hopefully we have a record.

The people who own the place have tried burning a few areas from 1988 through to last year. It was interesting to see the difference in each area. Kangaroo Paw seems to be one plant that benefits from a burn.

The other interest at Kalflora was a young pet Magpie who sounded like a group of children at play. It met us at the car park, and we really thought we could hear children at first, until we realised it was Magpie. By that time it was sitting on my foot and trying to remove my shoelaces. It lost interest once I'd changed into my boots, The white shoes seemed to be the interest.

After Kalbarri we stayed one night at Enneabba. That's a place I'd happily stay several days. It's on the Northern Sandplains, and has a walking track. The owner finally convinced CALM (Conservation and Land management) to shift the walking track down the centre of the sandplain to the river instead of along the fenceline, and it's a real pleasure to walk around it. Lots of flowers were out; Kangaroo and Cat's Paws, Thryptomenes, Hibbertias, Dampiera, Leschenaultia, Smoke Bush, lots of wattles, Scarlet Feather Flower, Daisies, Cowslip and Spider Orchids - lovely, and especially so when accompanied on the 1.5 hour walk by a young Emu called 'Tuesday'.

Accommodation at Enneabba was in a farmer-built mud brick 'chalet', one of four under one roof. The rain next day rather spoilt any idea of staying another day for the non-naturalist, so we moved on next morning.

The sandplains are a real treasury of plants. There's nothing quite like driving through miles of orange and white banksia, wattles, and White-plume Hakea. - known at Kalbarri as 'Fishermens Socks' because of their 'perfume'. A stop at the side of the road reveals all sorts of treasures, including orchids and daisies.

Rita Mills.

CASTLEMAINE SEWERAGE WORKS BIRD LIST

Lists were made by Philip West on 31 May (m) and 30 Aug (a), 1992.

Hoary-headed Grebe	ma	Dusky Moorhen	ma	Red Wattlebird	ma
Sacred Ibis	m	Purple Swamphen	ma	Yellow-faced H'eater	a
Black Swan	ma	Black-front Dotterel	a	New Holland H'eater	m
Black Duck	ma	Masked Lapwing	ma	Spotted Pardalote	ma
Grey Teal	ma	Silver Gull	m	Silvereye	a
White-eyed Duck	m	Grey Fantail	ma	Red-browed Firetail	ma
Wood Duck	a	Restless Flycatcher	m	House Sparrow	m
Little Eagle	m	Welcome Swallow	ma	Goldfinch	a
Brown Falcon	m	Flame Robin	a	Starling	ma
Peregrine Falcon	m	Superb Fairy Wren	ma	Magpie Lark	ma
Black-shoul'd Kite	a	Little Grassbird	m	Grey Currawong	m
Sulphur-c' Cockatoo	a	Blackbird	ma	Magpie	ma
Galah	m	Yellow Thornbill	m	Little Raven	m
Crimson Rosella	a	Striated Thornbill	a	Australian Raven	ma
Coot	ma	Yellow-rumped Thornb	ma		

BIRDS IN THE PINE PLANTATION

This area was alive with honeyeaters, in the low thick scrub and in the Red Ironbarks. Spinebills were numerous in the scrubby regrowth, and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters moved north in extraordinary numbers. They were everywhere. White-eared Honeyeaters sat at the top of pine trees,

apparently wondering what was going on. Red Wattlebirds flocked in their masses on the flowering Red Ironbarks, and Crimson Rosellas and Silver-eyes cruised overhead adding a different touch to the day's happenings.

White Cockatoo	133	Red-browed Finch	10	Blackbird	1
Red Wattlebird	114	White-eared H'eater	8	Grey Shrike-thrush	1
Yellow-faced H'eater	61	Brown Thornbill	5	Golden Whistler	1
Crimson Rosella	35	White-naped H'eater	5	Collared Sparrowhawk	1
Silvereye	33	Magpie	2	White-brow Scrubwren	1
Corella	27	Blue Wren	2	Little Grebe	1
Eastern Spinebill	21	Australian Raven	2	Grey Currawong	heard
Brown-headed H'eater	12	Spotted Pardalote	2	Weebill	heard
Yellow-tufted H'eater	10	Straw-necked Ibis	1		

Simon Kennedy

[The area Simon describes is at a small fire dam just off Water Race Hill Track and Loop Track on the north-west part of Moonlight Flat plantation. Ed.]

SANDON IN AUGUST

Birds seen at the bird bath were

Grey Fantail (pair)	Brown Thornbills	White-eared Honeyeaters
Wrens	Yellow Thornbills	White-naped Honeyeaters
Striated Thornbills	White-T Treecreeper (pr)	Yellow-faced Honeyeaters

Birds seen on the property were

Australasian Grebe	Welcome Swallow (pair)	Red Wattlebirds
White-faced Heron	Richard's Pipit	Fuscous Honeyeaters
Pacific Black Duck	Scarlet Robin (pair)	Brown-headed Honeyeaters
Maned Duck (pair)	Hooded Robin (pair)	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Little Eagle (pair)	Yellow Robin (pair)	White-plumed Honeyeaters
Brown Falcon	Crested Shrike-tit (pr)	Spotted Pardalotes
Masked Lapwing	Golden Whistler (pr+im)	Striated Pardalotes
Galahs	Grey Shrike-thrush (pr)	Silvereyes
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Restless Flycatcher (p)	Diamond Firetail
Crimson Rosella	White-browed Babbler -	Red-browed Firetail
Eastern Rosella (pr)	pr; just across road!	White-winged Choughs
Horsefield Bronze Cuckoo	Speckled Warbler	Magpies
Pallid Cuckoo (27/8)	Weebill	Grey Currawong (pair)
Owlet Nightjar	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Australian Raven
Kookaburras	Buff-rumped Thornbills	

Susanna Starr.

OBSERVATIONS

PELICANS. 28 Pelicans were seen at Laanacoorie Reservoir near the Broken Bridge. Few other water birds were seen. (MO)

BLUE CALADENIAS have formed a carpet in parts of Muckleford Forest. (GB)

MUCKLEFORD BIRDS heard near the Red White and Blue mine included Orioles, Speckled Warblers, Crested Bell Birds and three species of cuckoo. (GB)

WALLABIES Several wallabies were seen in Muckleford Forest. (GB) Two can usually be seen near the old tip site, early in the morning. (GE)

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WOOD DUCK A female was seen perched on a chimney ledge in Hunter Street, apparently looking for a nesting site; later perching in a tree at the corner of Hargraves and Hunter Street (SP). A pair of Wood Duck with two Black Duck were seen on the High School Oval (GB). Wood Duck were seen on the gravel next to the highway at Kilmore, despite heavy traffic. (EP)

INDIAN MYNAHS continue to be seen. Some permanently in Gaulton Street over past weeks. (EG)

SANDON ORCHIDS IN FLOWER on Sept 16 were Dwarf Greenhood, Nodding Greenhood, Swan Greenhood and Blunt Greenhood, Blue Caladenia, Pink Fingers, Golden Moths and Broad-lipped Diuris. Mosquito Orchids were in bud. (SS)

MOPOKE has been heard from Kennedy Street, calling from the west on September 23rd. (BM)

SHINING BRONZE CUCKOOS. A pair were seen at Glenluce. Wings were iridescent on flight. (SP)

DUCKS IN SIGHT-A WATERFOWL I.D. COURSE.

This video-tape can be borrowed from the Castlemaine Library. The video was prepared by the South Australian Field and Game Association with the Victorian Department of Conservation and Environment. The main purpose of the wildfowl identification course is to assist shooters identify ducks before shooting at them. Often shooters need to identify ducks rapidly in very poor light conditions.

Many field naturalists have some difficulty in identifying them in good light conditions, and so will find this video interesting. The video also promotes ethical hunting procedures. Allow plenty of time if you watch it in a single session. EP.

ADDITIONS TO THE PLANT LIST

Additional plants for the Castlemaine Plant List are
Variable Willow-herb (*Epilobium billardierianum ssp billardierianum*) from

Forest Creek on 23/3/92. Another subspecies (*E. billardierianum* ssp *cinereum*) is common in the district. The new subspecies has broader leaves in opposite pairs, and is usually found in moister conditions. Additional area records include

Curly Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) from Forest Creek on 23/3/92.

Purple-top verbena (*Verbena bonariensis*). Forest Creek on 23/3/92.

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SUPPER: Oct E Hall & P Shaw; Nov L Jackson & B Maund

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 1992

Single \$12; Family \$18; Student/pensioner \$8; Supporting member \$20
Newsletter posted: subscription plus \$6

COMMITTEE: B Maund (pres), G Broadway (vp & treas), B Envall (vp), M Oliver (sec), C & C Norwood, S Parnaby, R Mills (editor & public off-icer), K Turner (progams), B Perry, C Morris, and E Perkins (asst newsletter).

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Fri 9 Oct. BIRDS OF THE MALLEE. Speaker is Charlie Silveria, who has spent 15 years working on the ecology of the Mallee. 8 pm at High School.

Sat 10 Oct. CROCODILE TRACK. Walk along the Crocodile Track, Fryerstown. Leader is E. Perkins. Meet SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30. Take walking shoes.

Sun 11 Oct. MALDON STEAM TRAIN WILDFLOWERS with Bendigo Native Plant Group. See the Smith's Reef wildflowers. 1 pm, 2 pm or 3 pm at Maldon Railway Station. Alight in Smith's Reef Forest and catch one of the return trains. Cost \$7 (adult), Children (4-15 years) \$4, Family \$20, Concession Pass Holders \$5. Profit towards One Tree Hill appeal. Buy tickets from BNPG members at the station, not from the ticket office.

Thurs 15 Oct. THURSDAY EXCURSION. Joint CFNC/U3A birdwatching excursion. Meet Cont. Education car park, Templeton St at 9.30 am. Leader M Oliver.

Fri 16 Oct. CAPE BROOM PULL. 9.00 am at Botanic Gardens West (cr Froomes Rd and Mary St. Program: Pulling of stray Cape Broom, to prevent seed set in the areas cleared over the past few years. Many hands needed.

Tues 20 Oct. RAILWAY WALK. Survey of some of the local railway lines. Meet 15 Gaulton St at 9.00 am. Take lunch and walking boots.

Thurs 22 Oct. BUSINESS MEETING 7.30 pm at 27 Doveton Street.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM (cont)

Fri 16 - Sun 18 Oct. Mt ECCLES CAMPOUT. Details in Sept Castlemaine Nat.

Sun 25 Oct. OPEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS. Open gardens will be in Bendigo area and is being organised by the Bendigo Native Plant Group. Proceeds to One Tree Hill appeal. Gardens are Alan and Nance Young (Fadersons Lane, Mandurang), Marg Holland (Fadersons Lane, Mandurang), Geoff Pelly (12 Hasker St, Golden Square), Faye Boyle (199A Holdsworth Road), Maisie Ross (1/17 Wirth St) and Emu Creek Arboretum. Cost \$2, or all for \$5.

Sat 31 Oct. KALIMNA WALK. Festival program. 10.00 am. Meet at Kalimna Walking Trail on the Tourist Road.

Wed 4 Nov. KAWEKA WALK. Kaweka committee tour. 6.30 pm. Turner St.

Sat 6 Nov. BALLARAT F.N.C. PORTIETH ANNIVERSARY DINNER. Informal dinner at Webbconna Bowling Club, cr Grevillea Rd and Grandview Grove, Wendouree. Cost of 3 course dinner is \$13.50. RSVP Fri 9 Oct to John Gregurke, 1 John St, Wendouree.

Sat 7 Nov. KALIMNA WALK. Festival program. 2.00 pm. Meet at Kalimna Walking Trail on the Tourist Road.

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

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

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

Thurs 19 Nov. THURSDAY EXCURSION. Joint CFNC/U3A birdwatching excursion to Tullaroop Reservoir. 9.30 start; take lunch.

Fri 11 Dec. MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT 8 pm at High School.

Sat 12 Dec. TANG TANG SWAMP. Leave SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30. Take tea and afternoon tea. Tang Tang is east of Dingee. Leader: G Sitch.

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

Sat 6 - Mon 8 March. TIMBOON CAMPOUT. Combined WVFNCA and VFNCA campout at "Kangarooobie", Princetown. Further details from E. Perkins.

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