

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST



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BUTTERFLY PRINTS IN THE HOME

A common blue butterfly was seen floating on its back in a garden tub one morning. As a novice butterfly identifier, I wanted to examine it, and I also thought I might save it. I slipped a piece of paper under it and pulled it out, damply attached. Wiggling of legs and antennae indicated life, but the wings were immobile. Tough on the butterfly, but good for an identifier. I got out my notebook and began sketching. After ten minutes I finished my sketch and still the butterfly was wiggling helplessly. I decided it might help the drying process if I stuck the paper up by the window. Progress was slow, and I began doing something else. Presently I looked up and was surprised to see a blue butterfly at large, perched at the bottom of the window, while the shape of a butterfly remained attached to the paper. Closer examination showed that what was on the paper was a fairly detailed colour print of the top of the wings, made up of detached scales and a few body hairs. The butterfly itself was in good flying shape and was liberated. (Species *Zizina otis* - the common grass blue - I later established.) I kept the print for my notebook.

Unfortunately, I think the method works only if your butterfly has landed on its back. Not really recommended.

R. Webb. 24-3-93

TIPPERARY SPRINGS OUTING.

The afternoon was fine and sunny, but only a few people were at the S.E.C. meeting place, but we added another at Guildford, and found, not the three I had expected but 9 or 10 waiting for us at the Springs. It had been decided to take the track to Bryce's Flat, and perhaps even do the circuit past Mistletoe Mine. Doug and I had followed the track for about a mile or so the previous Monday, and I knew there were a few flowers out, including one which turned out to be *Dillwynia phyllicoides*, a pea with small, spirally-twisted leaves. I'd also seen two Rufous Fantails and four Red-browed Tree Creepers, so we were in high hopes.

The trail is narrow, and there is a lot of gorse and weeds generally, but the walk above the creek, and in and out of side gullies, is a very pleasant one, with glimpses of promising birding spots at bathing times, as well as masses of Maidenhair Fern and Necklace Fern in one gully. Plants in flower were the *Dillwynia*, a small-leaved *Bossiaea* which I think was *B. buxifolia*, Magenta Stork's-bill (*Pelargonium rodneyanum*),

Tufted and Tall Bluebells, a Hyacinth Orchid, a narrow leafed *Senecio*, Tall Lobelia, *Viola hederacea*, Hop Goodenia, a cutleaf daisy and *Bursaria spinosa*.

We didn't make a long bird list, but we did see some special birds. The most common for the afternoon had to be Superb Blue Wrens and Grey Fantails, with Crimson Rosellas not far behind, but the thrills of the day were a Powerful Owl roosting in a Blackwood growing in a gully, making the bird perched high in the branches almost on a level with the path, and a Rufous Fantail which was just a little further along in the same side gully.

Other birds seen were Red-browed Finches, Buff-tailed and Brown Thornbills, Striated Pardalotes, and White-browed Scrubwrens.

Some of the party did the circuit but some turned back - and the ones who did the circuit were back at the springs before most of the others!

Rita Mills

A DAWN BREAKFAST February 27, 1993

A little group of seven set off at 6.15 am on a mild, calm, slightly overcast dawn. We turned off the main road just before Irishtown into an area of tall timber, blackberries, Pampas Grass, swamps, a small creek, an old gravel pit and a couple of ponds.

It doesn't sound much, but it was beautiful and the stillness and silence was broken by a delightful chorus from all around. The sun was coy, but visibility was good. A little campfire made delicious toast.

The list of birds seen was as follows.

White-faced Heron	Yellow Robin	Mistletoe Bird
Brown Goshawk	Golden Whistler	Red-browed Firetails
Crimson Rosellas	Eastern Shrike-tit	Gold Finches
Bronze-winged Pigeons	Blue Wrens	White-winged Choughs
Kookaburras	Scrub Wren	Grey Currawong
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Brown Thornbills	Magpies (at 5.45 am)
Welcome Swallows	Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters	Ravens
Grey Shrike-thrush	White-eyes	H.O.

BIRD ESPERANTO

No doubt most bird calls are mainly intelligible to conspecifics. Others, like cries of alarm and distress, clearly cross boundaries of species and even animal type. There is yet another class which means little to non-birds, but which almost all birds must understand. I am thinking in particular of the high-pitched, piping wail with which birds will some-

times greet the approach of a raptor - such as was heard by the Field Naturalists during the Glenluce excursion last year. It causes even small birds which hear it to hide and repeat the call. An eerie chorus sweeps the tree tops and it seems as if all birds have flown off.

I personally have heard it only on this occasion, but it is known world-wide. W. H. Thorpe of Cambridge in his "Animal Nature and Human Nature" describes and analyses it. It is a call centred about 7 kHz - that is, somewhere just above the piano scale - slowly falling in pitch and with a gradual onset and decay. Its characteristics make it difficult to localise. A number of species make essentially the same call. Even the domestic fowl, whose vocal equipment is not up to it, emits a "low, regular trill" to the same purpose and with similar elusive characteristics. By contrast, calls of anger or distress, which are designed, if anything, for easy location, have staccato characteristics. The mobbing chatter of small birds has surprising points of similarity across species - rapid pulses, broad frequency spectrum - which I suppose invite everyone to come and join in.

R. Webb. 24-3-93.

NAILCANS AND WALLENJOEYS

While I was in Albury visiting my sister recently, my brother-in-law took me up to one of his favourite stamping grounds when he was a boy - the Nailcan Range. The track is along the ridge for a great deal of the way, and there are some beautiful views across to the Alps, but the things that intrigued me most were the masses of *Grevillea alpina*, an orange and yellow form, coming into flower, and hundreds of tall bluebells. I saw very few birds, but that wasn't surprising because I seldom see a lot of birds on ridgetops, and certainly not when trail bikes are roaring around the area, and, no, they're not supposed to be there.

To make up for lack of birds here, Wallenjoey Swamp, just west of Stanhope was swarming with them. I added to an already impressive list for just a 20 minutes stop at Lake Cooper, a few miles further on near Corop. The only ducks I could identify (there was a lot of shimmer over the water) were Black Duck, Grey Teal and Australian Shelduck. I'm not sure what the duck-hunters camped on a spit of land in the swamp thought of that. Birds seen at the Swamp were White-faced and Pacific Herons, Intermediate and Greater Egrets, White Ibis, Pelicans, Swans, Grey Teal, Black Duck, Australian Shelduck, Little Pied, Little Black and Greater Black Cormorants, Hoary Headed and Little Grebes, Swamphens, Dusky Moorhens, Silver Gulls, and Clamorous Reed Warbler. At Lake Cooper I added Willie Wagtail, Straw-necked Ibis, Welcome Swallows, Mudlarks, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Black-fronted Plover, Kookaburra and Darter. I would love to have had more time, and also a better place to view - the side of the road with heavy transports roaring past is not comfortable!

Rita Mills

SANDON IN FEBRUARY 1993

Bird seen at the bird bath were

Scarlet Robin (pair)	Striated Thornbill	Striated Pardalote
Grey Fantail (pair)	White-throated Treecreeper	Silveryeyes
Wrens	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Magpies
Brown Thornbill	Spotted Pardalotes	Grey Currawong (pair)
Buff-rumped Thornbill		

Birds seen on the property were

Australasian Grebe	Crimson Rosella	Willie Wagtail
White-necked Heron (flying over)	Eastern Rosella	White-browed babbler
White-faced heron	Red-rumped Parrot (pair)	Weebill
Little Eagle	Shining Bronze-cuckoo	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Brown Falcon	Owlet Nightjar	Southern Whiteface
Black-fronted Plover (pr N; nest abandoned after 2 wks)	Kookaburra (pair)	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Common Bronzewing	Welcome Swallows	Fuscous Honeyeater
Galaha	Richard's Pipit	Red-browed Firetail
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Bl-faced Cuckoo-shrike (pr)	Diamond Firetail
	Blackbird	White-winged Choughs
	Rufous Whistler (pair)	Australian Raven

Susanna Starr.

THE MARCH THURSDAY MORNING BIRD WATCH

The combined U3A/CFNC outing was led by Chris Morris and was to Sailor's Flat, Chewton. This area is to the north of the highway, and is reached by taking the road past Badgers Keep.

One of the dams visited had many plants around the edge, including some of the less common water plants, like Floating Club-rush (*Isolepis inundata*) and Wiry Rush (*Juncus homalocaulis*). The former is a little like a bright-green grass. The 10-20 cm long stems have a cluster of green and brown flowers at the end. Offshoots from these flower clusters may also have clusters of flowers. Wiry Rush is a small rush, usually about 10 cm high, and differs from the more common rushes by having leaves. The petals/sepals are much longer than the seed-case, giving the flower a spiky appearance. The wet summer appears to have been to the liking of wiry rush, and it has been recorded from many localities this year.



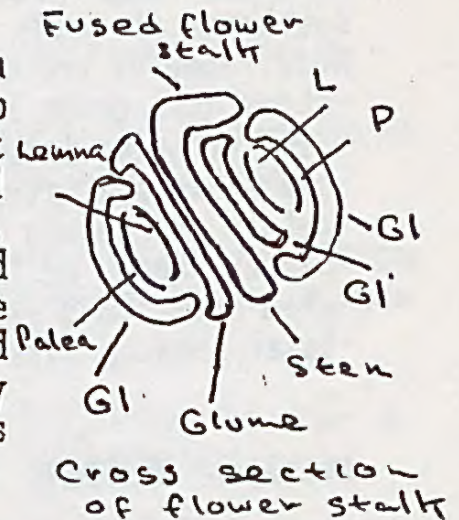
Isolepis inundata



Juncus homalocaulis

Along the track to Forest Creek, patches Mat Grass

(*Hemarthria uncinata*) were in flower. This is a curious grass, in that the flowers are recessed into the stem, so that the whole is quite cylindrical. It is a difficult grass to name by using a botanical key unless the arrangement of flowers is recognised. The flowers appear to form a raceme (i.e. stalked flowers along the stem). However, the flowers are actually in pairs, and the stalk of the second flower is fused to the stem - the flower is actually a panicle. It is hard to draw. Even expert artists find it hard to show the flower arrangement clearly.



Close to Badger's Keep, Fleabane was in flower. The species here was the Canadian Fleabane (*Conyza canadensis*), rather than the more common Tall Fleabane. Canadian Fleabane is much less hairy than the tall variety.

A most enjoyable outing.

E.P.

ADDITIONS TO THE PLANT LIST

There can be a problem in deciding whether or not a plant should be included the plant list. The list contains the plants deemed to be growing wild. Often, in the bush, trees like quince, or plants like iris or rosemary are found growing - evidence of a former habitation. If the plant is not spreading, then the plant is not included on the list. Generally poplars and elms are not yet on the list, even though there may be dense suckering at the base, and young plants growing nearby. Nor are the fruit trees, although there are many instances of these spreading past the boundaries of orchards. One criterion often used is that the plant has persisted for at least 25 years - this would make additions to the list rather uncommon, at least for the next quarter century. Belladonna Lily is also not yet on the list. Should it be?

BULBIL WATSONIA **Watsonia bulbillifera*

Bulbil Watsonia is widespread in the district e.g. Lewis Road, Woodbrook Road, at the Taradale Cemetery, and numerous other localities. Bulbil Watsonia grows to about a metre. It has red tube-flowers held horizontally, and often the flower stalk is also reddish. In the lower part of the stem the plant grows clusters of bulbils rather than flowers. Further records of this distinctive species would be welcomed.

CROCOSMIA **Crocoshmia x crocosmiiflora*

Crocoshmia is another member of the iris family that has now been included in the plant list. The "x" in the name indicates that it is a hybrid species, in this case a garden hybrid from two South African species. Crocoshmia grows to about 60 cm. It has flat leaves, arising from the base of the plant. The orange tube-shaped flowers are in a spike-like spray. Crocoshmia has been recorded from several localities, such as McKitterick's Road. It is also often seen in gardens.

SOUTHERN RUSH (*Juncus australis*). This rush was found growing in the southernmost parts of the Metcalfe Shire, for example, along Boundary Road. Some of the distinguishing characters of Southern Rush are

- stems dull green in colour and about 2 mm in diameter.
- pith of stems interrupted by air spaces
- the flowers clustered on the flower branches
- petals and sepals 2.0-3.0 mm long,
- capsule about as long, or slightly shorter, than the petals and sepals.
- stem striations distinct, and 35-60 in number.
- basal sheaths dark brown

To be continued. E.P.

MORE NAME CHANGES

The name changes to familiar plants continues. All of the *Helichrysums* and *Helipterums* have now been transferred to other genera. This means new names to remember. Some, however, welcome the changes. For example, Judy Barker, a member of the S.G.A.P. Australian Daisy Study Group writes (in the S.G.A.P.V. March Newsletter)

"As the new classifications and revisions are published, we are seeing sweet reason appear - from the growers point of view as well as from the taxonomist's"

"In the past we have been worried about the almost random characters displayed in the two genera mentioned." [*Helipterum* and *Helichrysum*].

"And that .. taxonomists.. seek..to bring order out of chaos. Many of us find it exhilarating."

She goes on to show that plants grouped together in the one general have similar germination and growth requirements.

Common Everlasting (now *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*) has two segregates given informal status. *C. aff. apiculatum* (Annual) from northern Victoria has an annual habit and broad-based, more or less stem-clasping leaves. *C. aff. apiculatum* (inland plains) from western Victoria is smaller, and has narrower, less woolly leaves and flower heads less than 1 cm across. Our populations are quite variable, and will need to be examined to see if we have one of these variants.

White Everlasting (*Helichrysum baxteri*), which grows near Fryerstown, is now *Chrysocephalum baxteri*.

Hoary Sunray (formerly *Helipterum albicans*) is now *Leucochrysum albicans*

Yam Daisy is now to be known as *Microseris aff lanceolata*.

Billy Buttons (formerly *Craspedia glauca*) has been divided into nine

species. A copy of the key to the new species can be obtained from E.P.).

Little Sword-sedge (formerly *Lepidosperma lineare*) is now *Lepidosperma* sp I. It has been recorded at Smith's Reef, Walmer and Fryer's Ridge.

Digger's Speedwell has had another name change. It has changed from *Parahebe perfoliata* to *Derwentia perfoliata*. Derwent Speedwell has become *Derwentia derwentiana*

Twin-flowered Beard-heath (formerly *Leucopogon biflorus*) is now *L. fletcheri* ssp A. It is common on the hills south of Castlemaine.

A list of name changes made to local plants over the past 20 years can be obtained from me, on request.

E.P.

OBSERVATIONS

TAWNY FROGMOUTH landed on the carport roof (at Castlemaine North) on 23 March. Very dark coloured in front, so probably a juvenile. (RM)

PIED STILTS have been seen on a dam in the Moolort Plains. (RM)

DUCKS have been more plentiful than usual on a Harcourt dam, following duck-shooting opening. (GB).

RED-LEG GRASS (*Bothriochloa macra*) has been seen in Urquhart St, growing in a crack in a concrete drain. (EP)

BELL'S SWAMP BIRDS included 7 juvenile Pink-eared Duck, in a raft. Also approx a dozen Hardhead. (SP)

BLACKBIRDS NEST was seen with 6 peach stones inside at Guildford. (FD)
Has any reader an explanation for this?.

BLACK SNAKE SWIMMING. The snake, on being disturbed, swam across the dam (at Sandon) (BW)

UNSHY GREBE. The new brood of Grebe seem to lack fear, being not at all shy. Birds are not present any longer. (BW).

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 1993

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

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Excursions leave promptly at the times indicated.

Fri 9 April. NO MEETING. (Good Friday)

Sat 10 April. GAASH RD and HARCOURT NTH RESERVOIR. Birds and mistletoes. Leader: E. Perkins. Meet SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30 pm. Take binoculars.

Thurs 15 April. BIRDWATCHING. Joint CFNC/U3A birdwatching outing. Meet Cont Ed car park, Templeton St at 9.30 am. Leader: K Turner.

Thurs 22 April. BUSINESS MEETING. 7.30 pm at 38 Campbell St.

Fri 14 May. HELEN ASTON "JOYS OF THE CANNING STOCK ROUTE." 8.00 pm at Lawson Hall, High School.

Sat 15 May. TERRICK TERRICK. All day excursion. Meet 27 Doveton St at 10.00 am. Route via Eaglehawk Town Hall and Mitiamo. Leader: E Perkins. This is a joint excursion with the Southern Riverina F.N.C.

Thurs 20 May. BIRDWATCHING. Joint CFNC/U3A birdwatching outing. Meet Cont Ed car park, Templeton St at 9.30 am. Leader: E. Perkins.

Fri 11 June. ECOLOGY OF BOX-IRONBARK WOODLAND. Speaker is Doug Robinson. High School at 8.00 pm.

Sat 12 June. WERONA CEMETERY. Leader: K Turner.

Fri 9 July. WADERS OF AUSTRALIA AND OVERSEAS. Speaker is Mark Barter. 8 pm at High School.

Aug 20-22 BARMAH CAMPOUT. Meeting of WVFNCA at Dharya Centre, Barmah. Bunkhouse accommodation with 2,4 or 6 persons/room.

Fri Oct 8 PAT BINGHAM - "BIRD HABITAT - HOW YOU KNOW YOU HAVE GOT IT". High School at 8.00 pm.

Spring STIEGLITZ WILDFLOWERS

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.

Supper: May: B Maund and M Willis.

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