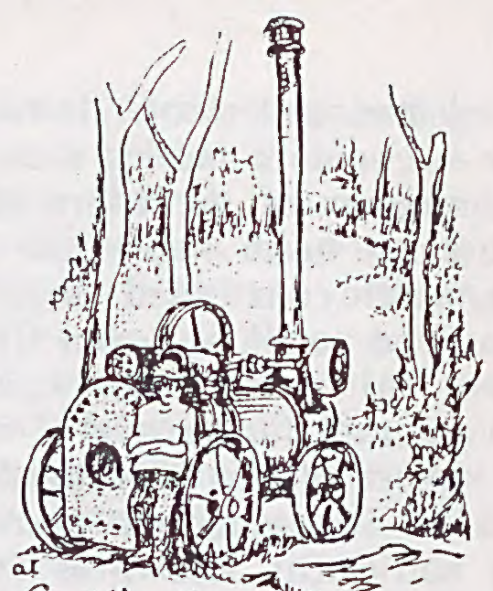


Castlemaine Naturalist

July 1995

Vol 19.6 #213



Dargo walk continued - Good Hope Mine N°2.

Grant Historic Reserve

We stayed overnight at the Dargo Hill Tavern - an impressive conversion of the former timber mill - and next morning we were joined by two D.C.N.R. rangers who accompanied us on the first section of the walk, because of the difficulty of the terrain and the poorly defined track.

First we drove to the site of the abandoned township of Grant in the mountains above Dargo - once a thriving community of 2000 people during the gold rush days of the 1860's to early 1900's. All that remains is a grassy clearing surrounded by beautiful forests, which conceal the relics of that era.

At Crooked River lookout a little further on we left our cars - the end of the road for ordinary vehicles - and after taking in the magnificent panorama of mountains and winding river, set out to find the narrow walking track on the damp southern side of the spur, above the old Good Hope mine.

The vegetation was lush with tree ferns and clematis among the thick shrubbery under the tall eucalypts. We heard frequent lyre-bird calls, and discovered a "dancing" mound. The rangers led up to a small mining tunnel cut into solid rock on the steep hillside, and to various bits of rusted machinery hidden among the scrub, which has been used to truck the ore down the almost perpendicular slopes to the small stone crushing battery in the valley below. Extremely dangerous working conditions, which probably accounted for so many of the graves in the picturesque Grant cemetery being those of young men.

We returned to a section of the four wheel drive track on top of the spur for lunch, on the only bit of level ground in the area. The rangers left us at this point to make our own way for the afternoon descent on the very dry northern side of the spur, with encouraging remarks to the effect that it was "downhill all the way" - rather an understatement as it turned out!

The track was horrendously steep as it zig-zagged across the face of the spur, to take us down from 3300ft to the level of the river at 900ft. Difficult conditions because of the dry crumbling soil and slippery dry

leaves underfoot. It took two hours to negotiate, and the strain on the knee joints and leg muscles seemed comparable only to that on the lower regions of the Uluru descent! Perched above the river we found the small steam engine and stone crushing battery with nearby mullock heap which constituted Good Hope mine n^o 2, the machinery in surprisingly good condition, even though operations had ceased about 75 years ago.

Just below this we reached the Crooked River, and, after a necessary interval for recovery, continued for the final few kilometres along the banks of this beautiful stream.

We emerged eventually on to the site of another abandoned settlement, known as Talbotville, in a bend of the river and surrounded by the high mountains of the Blue Rag Range and Freezeout. By pre-arrangement a four wheel drive vehicle awaited to convey us in two groups back to the cars, and the driver was happy to have caught two magnificent trout in the river as he waited.

Shirley Parnaby.

Sandon Birds, May '95

White-faced Heron	Wren
Masked Lapwing	Weebill
Common Bronzewing	Brown,
Long-billed Corella	Buff-rumped,
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow-rumped,
Eastern Rosella	Yellow and
Crimson Rosella	Striated Thornbills
Australian Owlet-nightjar	White-throated Treecreeper
Kookaburra	Brown Treecreeper
Welcome Swallow	White-eared,
Scarlet Robin	Yellow-tufted,
Eastern Yellow Robin	White-plumed and
Golden Whistler	Black-chinned (7/5) Honeyeaters
Grey Shrike-thrush	European Goldfinch
Restless Flycatcher	White-winged Chough
Grey Fantail	Magpie
Willie Wagtail	Grey Currawong
White-browed Babbler	Australian Raven

Susanna Starr.

White-necked Goose?

A Taradale Observation

We live on a 20 acre property at Taradale. The country is undulating paddocks with tree belts on two sides near the Fryers Ranges State Forest. We have two dams. The larger one of about two megalitre capacity has been visited by a White-faced Heron for the last 5 years. He comes daily to fish for yabbies, many blue claws have been found on the edge of the water after he has had his dinner. He

sits in his favourite River Red Gum tree and observes the surroundings. For six weeks every year he brings a partner and after this stage he is absent for a period of six weeks to two months. Then he returns again by himself. This year, due to the drought, our large dam dried up. We keep a small dam filled with water from the bore for our breeding gaggle of geese. The small dam is surrounded by electric fencing. The White-faced Heron spent many days walking on the outside of the electric netting inspecting the geese. He would 'swim' in the small dam only after the geese had been put back in their shed for the night. Some days later, to my surprise, he actually joined the geese for a 'swim'. He became a little more adventurous with time. One day I noticed him walking in the middle of the gaggle of geese in front of the house. The dogs and cats looked but were not concerned. They are used to having many different kinds of birds around the yards. We even saw him in the vegetable garden digging in the compost heap and eating. Since the rain which produced 125mm in 5 days the large dam has filled up again and the White-faced Heron is back in his usual spot.

Annvan Gemert

Bird Name Changes

The recommended English Names for Australian Birds (REN)-RAOU 1978b has been brought up to date to reflect: (1) Changes to names of introduced or wide ranging birds to conform with international usage, (2) Changes as a result of changes in taxonomic status, (3) Changes to names that were found to be unpopular and have been changed after a RAOU survey, (4) English names of species new to the Australian list.

These changes are now published in the RAOU monograph N^o 2: The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia by Les Christidis and Walter Boles and a copy of this work with its full species list, discussion paper and references is available for loan to members on request.

Some of the birds we are familiar with in the district or at least expect to see from time to time, and have experienced a name change follow (with the former name in brackets):

- Australian Wood Duck (Maned duck)
- White-necked Heron (Pacific Heron)
- Nankeen Night Heron (Rufous Night Heron)
- Australian White Ibis (Sacred Ibis)
- Swamp Harrier (Marsh Harrier)
- Nankeen Kestrel (Australian Kestrel)
- Bush Stone-curlew (Bush Thick-knee)
- Beach Stone-curlew. (Beach Thick-knee)
- Black-fronted Dotterel (Black-fronted Plover)
- Major Mitchell's Cockatoo (Pink Cockatoo)

Australian Ringneck (Mallee Ringneck, Port Lincoln Ringneck)
Rockwarbler (Origma)
Red-browed Finch (Red-browed Firetail)
Painted Finch (Painted Firetail)
Bassian Thrush (White's Thrush)

Chris Morris

Update on the Flora of Victoria and the Herbarium

Most of my enquiries to the Herbarium re Autumn Greenhoods (see last month's C.N.) were answered; some puzzles solved, others compounded. *Pterostylus revoluta* - Autumn Greenhood - has 3 - 10 rosette leaves (3-4 in the Flora of Victoria is a mistake). A midge orchid with light green sepals was identified as *Genoplesium rufum* (lacks beady glands on petals).

Regarding plant distribution records of minor grids in the Flora: If a record of a particular orchid is an expected occurrence for an area they accept verbal/written records from observers 'who know their orchids'. If a record is unexpected or a species is rare they would want to see a photograph or other illustration. If they are still uncertain they would have to visit the site or, as a last resort, collect a specimen. It's good news that they are encouraging observations and discouraging collections.

However, on a not so positive note, from the 3rd of July the Herbarium will be charging a fee to members of the public for general inquiries and plant identification.

The botanist recommended a new definitive, fully illustrated identification guide to over 270 species of orchids; *The Orchids of Victoria* - Gary Backhouse and Jeffery Jeanes. M.U.P. RRP\$59-95. Published 5th June 1995. Susanna Starr

Observations for June

- * A Bluetongue lizard has been seen regularly in Kennedy St. usually on a north-facing bank in the garden. It was seen on the very cold Saturday 17th during a brief sunny period, and again on the 21st. B.M. (Bluetongues usually hibernate in winter, coming out on fine days to feed. Ed.)
- * A large flock of Indian Mynahs have been seen at Taradale. A.vanG
- * White-winged Choughs have been seen digging up Jonquil bulbs but have just left them lying on the ground and haven't attempted to eat them. A. vanG.
- * An Echidna is using a a drain pipe to cross the road near the Rifle Club. S.D.
- * Eastern Grey Kangaroos have been seen in Little Bendigo. C.M.
- * Red-browed Finches have been sighted in Thomas St. for the first time. M.W.
- * Six Gold Finches were seen in Kennedy St., and again on 21/6.

B.M.

* Fewer wallabies have been seen up the far end of Mary St. since the weather has changed. P.F.

* Observations from the house windows at Sandon: New Holland Honeyeaters feeding in flowering Red Stringybark - a new record for the block. Previously White-browed Babblers ventured only occasionally across the track into the block but in the past month have been frequent visitors, busy turning over ground litter in the front of the house. Over the past two months, a Brown Treecreeper has ventured into White-throated Treecreeper's domain, even drinking from the birdbath. S.S.

* A magpie was seen with a bunch of leaves in its beak, swishing the leaves at the end of a branch with them. Any suggestions as to why?

R.M.

* Six Shelducks were seen at Strathlea, two of them flying out of an aged eucalypt. M.O.

* A great variety of small birds were seen in flowering trees at Tullaroop picnic ground. K.T., M.O., G.B.

* An owl was seen at 11pm on 16/6 on the ground at Broadways in Wheeler St. G.B.

* A Darter, Cattle Egrets and four different raptors were seen in the Mt Barker area on the U3A/FNC outing.

*******Swift Parrot sightings. Please give any details for the survey to Ern Perkins.**

Californian Condors

A Letter from California

This is part of a letter to Kay Turner from her grandson who is working in California.

"The Californian Condor is the biggest flying bird in North America. It has been studied for the last 100 or so years. Twenty years ago the Endangered Species Act of America was enforced and the Condor was one bird involved in the act. A refuge was bought in 1975 for endangered animals. This is when the Condor recovery program began as the numbers continued to drop because of the removal of habitat. There is also was a problem with lead found in dead Condors. They were eating dead animals that had been shot by hunters and the Condor has a low tolerance to lead, so it only takes a small amount to kill them. A decision was made to capture the last remaining wild condors. They proceeded to breed in zoos very well. The last bird was captured in 1987 and there were only 27 left alive. Today there are 91 Condors, six of which live in the wild and these six are the ones we are looking after.

"All six live in the mountains behind Santa Barbara. They all have radio transmitters fixed to their wings and we use these to track the birds: We have to know where the birds are 24 hours a day. Luckily they don't fly until around 10 o'clock in the morning and are back by about 6.30pm. Last week I sat in the hide just above where they roost for nine hours a day just so we could see where they were going if they left. The biologist with me was in a 4 wheel drive so that he could follow the birds when they did fly. He had to chase the birds if they flew towards the town at the bottom of the mountain. If they do fly down he has to scare them back to the mountains. This makes sure that the birds don't land on power poles or on the roads.

"At the moment it is 0°C outside. It has snowed for two nights."

Terrick-Terrick Outing

May 13

Terrick-Terrick is a reserve lying some 55km north of Bendigo, near Mitiamo. Judging from the published notes on the area, it is famous chiefly for a large natural stand of White Cyprus-pine, *Callitris columellans* - a species which extends from there northerly into New South Wales. The reserve lies within a broad plain, which is broken by some low granitic mounds, from the tops of which one can see for many miles. One of these, lying at the southern end of the reserve, bears the name of Mt Terrick-Terrick. The pink granite breaks down into a course pink sand, providing a soil which favours the Cyprus-pine.

The point where we entered the reserve was the gate at the south-east corner, leading straight onto the stand of Cyprus-pine along a bordering track. The stand looks like a plantation. Every tree is neat and straight, with a trunk about 250 mm in diameter. Allowing for a slow growth rate, one might estimate a typical age of around 100 years. According to the published notes this is an excellent guess! A fire in the 19th century wiped out most of the old trees and germinated a complete new forest. There was some subsequent management to improve the stand. There are no old giants: just an occasional thicker, battered veteran.

Elsewhere in the reserve Grey and Yellow Box and Deane's wattle are common species.

On arrival we made for the picnic area under Mt Terrick-Terrick. I failed to realize it was a full-grown mountain; it looks deceptively climbable - just a bit of a granite hill. Water glistening on the rocks, and little piles of water-driven debris, indicated recent heavy rain. Grey skies and a keen wind, giving way to sporadic sunshine, did not promise good bird-watching. Still, our arrival was remarked on by a group of Galahs. We also witnessed a display by a Willy Wagtail, doing a kind of swinging dive-bombing routine, up-down up-down - for the benefit of another Wagtail as I recall.

On our subsequent tour we produced a modest bird list. George

Broadway, showing his usual verve, produced some of the less-common identifications. He and Maggie Oliver tracked down a pair of Gilbert's Whistlers by following up a duet between rival males calling from a distance to one another in the forest. The tour included a visit to Mitiamo Cemetery which adjoins. It is protected by a doubtful-looking fence, which may once have kept out rabbits, but certainly does not do so now. The area around the grave sites is full of pitfalls. Rabbits reign supreme here and in the surrounding grass-lands. Kangaroos are also present, of course; we noticed a pair on our arrival.

The tour climaxed with a visit by car to another granite mound more northerly in the reserve, called Regal's Rock. This called for a car trip through the light box forest. Further evidence of recent rain was provided by a treacherous-looking boggy patches on the way. Now, picture a prospect of green turf and bare, pink rock sloping towards a distant peak standing out against a windy grey sky. Reduce the scale a little, and you have Regal's Rock. Its modest size emboldened us to climb it. I was tut-tutting about some deep gouges in the turf which seemed to have been made by a villainous trail bike rider. A wiser soul said they were trenches left after a rabbit baiting campaign. So someone was doing something about the rabbits, at least where it seems to be most needed. Deane's wattles and Rock Isotomes (in scanty blossom) clung to the heights.

Having attained a commanding position, Chris Morris turned his eye to an approaching watery cloud and predicted rain. He was right. Down we ran back to the cars.

Bob Webb.

MT ALEXANDER SHIRE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

A meeting of local conservation groups and land care groups (to be called the Mt Alexander Conservation Strategy Group) was held on June 2nd, 1995. An aim of the group is to encourage the new shire to adopt a conservation strategy.

In July 1991, a conservation strategy was prepared by the Newstead Shire Residents' and Ratepayers Association inc., and substantially adopted by the Newstead Shire. The strategy included the planning of rural development, management of renewable and non-renewable resources, achievement of sustainable agricultural production, land use, retention and re-establishment of native vegetation, management of streams and wetlands, control of pests, plants and animals, minimisation of the impact of mining, soil conservation and salinity control, the wise use of agricultural chemicals, fire prevention and fire protection, protection of local heritage, protection of native fauna and flora, tourism, the minimisation of waste, the improvement of waste disposal, and the enhancement of landscape and township environments. This strategy could well form the basis of the new shire's conservation strategy. A copy of the Newstead Strategy Plan can be obtained from Ern Perkins. Comments (before 20th July) would be welcomed.

E.P.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

N.B. Excursions leave promptly at times stated.

General Meetings are held at Continuing Education, Templeton Street. .

Fri. July 14 Some District Birds Birds, and club members taking part, are - Rufous Whistler, G. Broadway; Babblers, C. Morris; Pardalotes, M. Oliver; Galahs, R. Mills; Grey Shrike-thrush, M. Willis; Wrens, M. Hunter. 8pm Cont. Ed. Templeton St.

Sat July 15 Mc Kittericks Road. Birdwatching. Leader is C. Morris. Leave CHIRP 13 Mostyn St at 1.30pm sharp.

Fri Aug. 11 Antarctica. Speaker is John Bradfield.

Sat Aug 12 Reservoirs on the Coliban River. Take warm clothing, binoculars, small change for entry into some reservoirs. BBQ lunch. BYO food and drinks. Leave 27 Doveton St. at 10.30am.

Fri Sept 8 Conservation of Grassy Woodlands . Speaker is Elvyne Hogan.

Sat Sept 9 Middletons Creek Track. Leader is E. Perkins.

Sat. Sept. 23 Excursion to Castlemaine by the Botany Group of Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.

Fri. Oct 13 "Albatrosses" and "Flora of the Royal Botanic Gardens". Speaker is Dr Phillip Moors.

Sat Oct 14 Excursion with Maryborough F.N.C. to Muckleford and Smiths Reef. Leaving 27 Doveton St., Castlemaine at 11 am. Leader, E. Perkins.

Sat. Nov. 4 at 10am. Kalimna Walk with the Gardens Festival.

Fri. Nov 10 Pond Life Speaker is Alan Reid.

Committee: C. Morris (Pres.), G. Broadway (V.P.), M. Willis (Sec.), B. Envall (Treas.), K. Turner (Prog.), R.Mills (P.O. & N/L Ed.), E. Perkins, M. Oliver, S. Parnaby, M. Hunter, S. Bruton, B. Maund.

Vale Kath Meehan. It was with sorrow that we learned of Kath's death. She was a valued member of the Club and the Committee. We will all miss her bubbly personality and her humour.

Meetings:-

General - Second Friday every month (except Jan) at Continuing Education, Templeton St. at 8 pm.

Business - Held on the 4th Thursday every month (except Dec.) at 38 Campbell Street at 7.30pm. All Members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions - 1995

. Ordinary Membership: Single \$14, Family \$20

Pensioner/Student: Single \$10, Family \$16. Supporting: \$25

Newsletter posted: Membership + \$6.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club Inc.
P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.

Street Trees of Castlemaine

The new edition has been printed. It lists all of the trees and shrubs that we can identify which have been planted in Castlemaine's streets.

Copies are available from the Castlemaine Library or at the meeting.