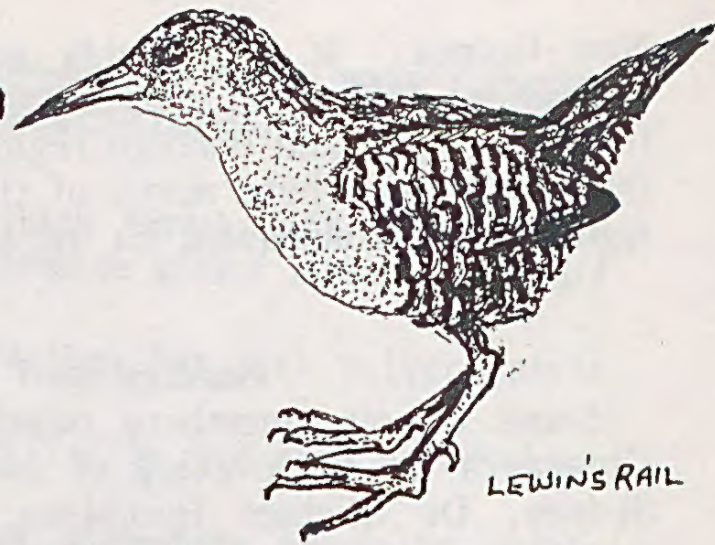


Castlemaine Naturalist



August '94

#203 Vol 18.7

Bird List for Sandon, June '94

Australasian Grebe	Speckled Warbler
White-necked Heron	Weebill
Pacific Black Duck	Brown,
Wedgetailed Eagle	Buff-rumped,
Brown Falcon	Yellow and
Masked Lapwing	Striated Thornbills
Galah	Varied Sitella
Crimson Rosella	White-throated Tree-creeper
Red-rumped Parrot	Red Wattlebird
Sthn. Boobook Owl (h)	Yellow-faced,
Australian Owlet-nightjar	White eared,
Kookaburra	Yellow-tufted,
Welcome Swallow	Fuscous,
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	White-plumed and
Scarlet Robin	Brown-headed Honeyeaters
Eastern Yellow Robin	Spotted Pardelote
Jacky Winter	Silvereye
Golden Whistler	Red-browed Firetail
Grey Shrike-thrush	Diamond Firetail
Restless Fly-catcher	White-winged Chough
Grey Fantail	Magpie
Willie Wagtail	Grey Currawong
Wren	Australian Raven.

Susanna Starr.

Lewin's Rail at Sutton Grange

The Sutton Grange Landcare Group is conducting a survey of birds in the area using the Grid Recording system used by the C.F.N.C. In only two months of observation, some 89 species have been recorded. In late June Alan Hampton, who farms on the north-eastern slopes of Mount Alexander along Byrnes Road, brought a dead bird along to a Landcare meeting. The bird had apparently been killed by a cat. Subsequent identification confirmed the bird as a Lewin's Rail. The bird is usually found in coastal regions of mainland Australia, Tasmania, Indonesia and

New Guinea. It is a highly secretive bird, living in dense swampy vegetation, feeding on invertebrates including insects. It is a new record for Castlemaine and Bendigo regions and there have been few records of the species anywhere north of the Divide. Unfortunately many of the sightings are consequent on the bird having been killed by a cat.

Nigel Harland

Bendigo Bird Observers' Evening

Some of our members attended a meeting of the Bendigo Bird Observers' on the evening of 1st July to hear the guest speaker from Sydney, Dr Michael Hutchison of the R.A.O.U. He gave us an interesting account of a current survey of the bird life of the Wetlands of the Murray-Darling basin, in which anyone interested in participating is welcome to take part. (This involves observations of a chosen area at least four times over a period of 12 months, and a form to record same is available from our club)

The lower boundary of the area takes in Macedon and the lake at Ballarat, and we were shown slide illustrations of the various types of Wetlands over the vast area involved - e.g. the desert lakes, rice and cotton growing irrigated areas, cumbungi swamps of the Lachlan /Murrumbidgee junction, as well as lakes, dams, billabongs and tributaries of the main river systems - and some of the birds to be found in such areas.

At the conclusion of the evening we enjoyed the hospitality of the Bendigo group in the form of a welcome cup of tea or coffee and home made cakes.

Shirley Parnaby

61 Hunter Street, June/July

A quiet time at present apart from a flock of crimson rosellas putting on a noisy display in the eucalypts - a few mating squabbles, perhaps. The New Holland Honeyeaters brighten the winter days with cheerful whistles and calls as they visit the banksia blooms. A solitary common Bronzewing paid a brief visit to check out the wattle seeds, and the Red Wattlebirds are around continually.

After a particularly heavy frost one of the New Holland Honeyeaters was observed taking a "bath" in a bushy clump of eucalypt leaves as the frost melted, with a vigorous fluttering of wings and spraying moisture drops all around him.

For the rest, we have-

Eastern Rosellas

Sulphur Crested Cockatoos

A Grey Currawong

Blackbirds

Thornbills

Mistletoe-bird

Spinebills

Sparrows

Starlings

Ravens

Magpies

Silvereyes

Spotted Pardelote

Shirley Parnaby

EXCURSION TO PILCHER'S BRIDGE FAUNA AND FLORA RESERVE

We made several stops along Huddle Road.

Stop 1. Moderately hilly. Box/stringybark forest with Daphne Heath understory. Some tussock-grass (*Poa*). Extensive ground litter and orchid leaves.

Stop 2. Low level. Yellow Box/Grey Box/Red Box with Silver Wattle understory. Variety of grasses and forbs.

Stop 3. Moderately hilly. Box/Ironbark/Yellow Gum with mixed shrub understory.

Stop 4. Sloping. Ironbark/Grey Box with understory mostly of wattle species.

Plant List additions were

Field Wood-rush	Cat's Ear	Common Crane's-bill
Chocolate Lily	Yam Daisy	Slender Dodder-laurel #
Smilax #	Blue Pincushion	Silver Wattle
Common Wheat-grass	Nodding Saltbush #	Lightwood
Kangaroo Grass	Urn Heath	Heath Tea-tree
Wax-lip Orchid #	Gorse Bitter-pea	Sheep's Burr
Tall Greenhood #	Showy Parrot-pea	
Sticky Everlasting	Karella	(# new grid record)

Birds recorded for the reserve (or in the very near vicinity) were

White-faced Heron	Willie Wagtail	Weebills
Galahs	Restless Flycatcher h	Red Wattlebirds
Long-billed Corellas	Grey Shrike-thrush	Fuscous Honeyeaters
Eastern Rosellas	Blue Wren	Noisy Miners
Crimson Rosellas	White-thr. Treecreeper	White-winged Choughs
Wood Duck	Brown Treecreeper	Magpie
Shining Bronze Cuckoo h	Buff-rumped Thornbill h	(h heard)

Conclusion. An interesting forest, and well worth visiting in spring. Some trips to the northern and eastern portions of the reserve are desirable too. There is room several more excursions. E.P.

HOW TO REMEMBER PLANT NAMES

Some people have the ability to remember names of plants and animals, and people and all manner of other things, often after hearing the name only once. If you are in this class, read no further. If you are like me, at least 100 repetitions are needed, for say, 50% retention.

When I first began to go on excursions, many years ago, I noticed that the most knowledgeable of the group made lists of what they saw. Those interested in plants made a plant list, and those interested in birds made a bird list, and so on. They did this, even though all that went on the list was familiar, or they had been to the area many times.

It's a worthwhile thing to do. Writing a name down helps me to remember it. When I return to the area of bushland, I can look up the lists to see what was seen on previous visits, and this is a guide to what I should look for. This review of the list helps to fix the name in my

memory. And over the years, lists made have scientific value. Are new plants (or birds or animals) appearing in the bush, or are they dying out? Or, why is a particular patch of bush of conservation value?

Photography is also useful. After taking the photograph, I label it with the name of the species. An advantage is that I can return to the photograph at leisure, without the need for a bushland visit or waiting until the plant is in flower once more.

I also find that it is much easier to remember something with meaning than something meaningless. So if I do not know the meaning of a name, I look it up. After a while, the names start to fit a pattern, and this helps to make new names easier to remember.

Knowing the names of what you see makes bushland walks much more interesting. And you only have to learn half a dozen (at most) scientific names for others to listen in awe, and consider you an expert.

EP

OBSERVATIONS

FEEDING THE GREY BUTCHERBIRD. About 70 km north of Robinvale, in southern N.S.W., we decided to stop to eat an orange, and parked under a nearby Belah to do so. A Grey Butcherbird was perched just above the car, head on side, looking at us. Lesley threw it a small piece of orange. The butcherbird flew down, took the piece of orange, and returned to its perch. After "killing" the orange a couple of times, it flew over the road, completed the killing, and ate the orange, before flying back.

Thinking that butcherbirds were protein eaters, I threw it a few pieces of cheese, which it ignored totally. But when another piece of orange was thrown, it immediately flew down, and repeated its actions. It ate five small pieces of orange in this way. By this time we had run out of orange.

Its behaviour would not have been so remarkable if we had been in a well-frequented picnic ground, but here were in a rather isolated place.

EP.

FEEDING THE MAGPIES. When having morning tea at the Maldon picnic ground, on July 26, three magpies came up to the car. So we threw some of our food - orange-coconut slice. The magpies ate this eagerly, and after each swallow, turned up their beaks and warbled. A pity that the cook was not present to hear this appreciation of her cooking.

A few kilometres further on, along Nuggetty Road, we were greeted by a flock of no less than 240 magpies. But we had run out of the orange-coconut slice. What an amazing sound we missed. Imagine a chorus of 240 magpies.

EP.

SWAN AT FARADAY. A swan appeared on the dam. A first sighting. MH.

KILO-GOLDFINCHES. We made several visits to Jennings Hill (near Sutton Grange) to look for Flame Robins. On the first and third visits these were seen. On the second visit, two flocks of Goldfinches, each numbering about 1000, flew in to feed on the seed heads of grasses. MyH.

SILVEREYES AT MCKENZIES HILL have stripped the cotoneaster bushes of

berries. IP.

RESTLESS FLYCATCHER was observed outside the kitchen window (in Campbell St), removing cobwebs. A very active bird. KT.

IN FLOWER. Tall Greenhoods and Waxflower (GB) and Hardenbergia (EP).

CATTLE EGRETS were seen at Harcourt.

TIMELINE AUSTRALIA

Timeline Australia Project aims to recover and discover natural history event information held in diaries and notebooks, analyse them and seek for patterns that will allow local calendars to be established. It aims to set up monitoring programs for public input, so that the growing resource of timelines information can be used by all Australians for environmental management. Significant events include

- when something happens for the first or last time e.g. wildflowers start blooming.
- When the numbers of something common reach a peak or a trough e.g. large hatch of mayflies.
- effects of a natural or man-made catastrophe e.g. flood, fire, storm, drought.
- distribution changes in plant or animal populations e.g. revegetation, bird migration.
- major behavioural changes seen in animals e.g. flocking, nesting, hibernation.
- New plant or animal associations e.g. wasp fertilising an orchid.

The project is being co-ordinated by the Gould League. Further information from that group, or from me. E.P.

V.F.N.C.A. Field Studies Skills Workshop Camp Anglesea, 7 - 16 October.

Casuals wishing to attend John Landy's lecture (\$10 inc dinner) or the studies (\$10) will be most welcome if places are available, and may pay at the time.

For further information see Ern Perkins.

W.V.F.N.C.A. Wannon Campout 2-4 September

Bunkhouse accommodation on Glendining Homestead on the south-west shores of Rocklands reservoir is provided. Camping is permitted, but cost will be the same as for the bunkhouse.

You will need to provide your own breakfast both days, and lunch on Saturday. Other meals and suppers are provided by the Hosts.

Cost for the Campout is \$45, and it is recommended that attendance be for the whole campout. Wannon is planning an interesting mix of rambles, inspections and lectures.

Application should be sent, with money, on the form provided (the club has some), to Bruce Osborne (address on application form) by August 12.

Some More Observations

*Is there one very adventurous Restless Flycatcher around town, or are their numbers building up? Observed at Wheeler St, Campbell St, and Thomas St. G.B., K.T., M.W.

*There have been a number of reports of Pied Currawongs around the town.

*Spotted Quail-thrush at Poverty Gully Res. G.B.

*Bells Swamp dry except for a few small puddles. M.W.

*Eight or nine Straw-necked, and one lone White Ibis feeding in a paddock at Harcourt. B.E.

*Flock of Flame Robins at Jennings Hill Rd., Sutton Grange. M.O.

*Barn Owl on the property the excursion goes to at Tennyson. R.M.

Birding in the Suburbs

Twice over the past 3 weeks we have stayed with a friend in Blackburn. He lives not far from Kalang Park, which becomes Furness Park and we went along with him as he walked his dog in the evening the first day we were there. I was surprised at the amount of remnant vegetation (there were plenty of weeds and introduced natives, too) such as Gippsland Manna Gum, Bursaria (the smooth one) and Hop Goodenia, which was in flower.

But it was the number of birds that surprised me. I didn't have my binoculars with me that time, so before we left for home this time I headed off to the Park on my own, binoculars and notebook at the ready. Quite a number of people were walking, jogging or taking well behaved dogs for walks, and most spoke to me, one woman stopping and asking questions about my birdwatching. Apparently the park is very popular with birdos. I'm no longer surprised.

There were dozens of Musk Lorikeets in the street trees, along with Red Wattlebirds, Noisy Miners, Spotted Turtle-doves, Blackbirds and Starlings as I left our friend's place. As I neared the Park there were about 15 Eastern Rosellas (there are no Crimson down there) feeding on the rather grassy oval. Several Kookaburras started laughing soon after I entered the park, and then I heard the beautiful warbling song of a Grey Butcherbird perched in the tree just over the creek. There were no wattlebirds in the Park while I was there, but that could have been because there were so many Noisy Miners. I even saw them chasing Common Mynahs. Magpies and Little Ravens were there, and Rainbow Lorikeets replaced the Musk. When I got down to the western end of the Park there were Sulphur-crested Cockatoos making their presence heard, and I thought I could hear the creaking call of Gang-gangs, and when I was leaving the Park later I saw a pair of them fly over. There were also Galahs, Mudlarks and Wood Ducks there, and our friend told me that there are usually White-faced Herons either on one of the ponds or on the creek. Just before I headed back I noticed one brownish bird feeding among a group of Blackbirds. I finally identified it as a Song

Lark.

Perhaps because of the number of people that use the Park, and because the birds are not molested, they were not inclined to fly until I got quite close on most occasions. It proved to be a very pleasant hour.

Rita Mills

Great Dividing Trail Walks

All members of the public are welcome to join members on their walks. There is no charge, but if you need details, or have doubts about suitability, ring Joel Jackson, the walks co-ordinator on 053-451036. You only need to bring a snack, water and lunch, and wear footwear and clothing appropriate to the track and weather. Most longer walks finish before 4 pm.

Sunday Sept 11 - Lerderderg gorge. 12.5 km of hard walking. Not suitable for inexperienced walkers.

Start 9.30am at O'Briens Crossing, 6 km west of the Greendale/Trentham road turnoff, 3.5 km south of Blackwood.

Car Shuffle Point. 9 am, Square Bottle track off Blackwood Rd., 10 km south of Blackwood.

Leaders. Pat Conroy/ Joel Jackson.

Saturday Oct. 8 - "Over the Top" Walk - Daylesford to Nolan's Camp on the Lerderderg River over the Great Dividing Range

Start 9.30 am at the Daylesford Boathouse on Lake Daylesford, Leader, Pat Conroy.

Car Shuffle Point 9 am, Nolan Creek Camp, corner of Nolan Creek Rd. and Lerderderg Rd. on the Lerderderg River.

Leader Pat Conroy.

Also - Sunday Oct 30 - Great Wombat Railway Walk - a shorter walk for families and Sunday Nov 20, Lower Lerderderg Walk. Details later.

Expressions of interest are also asked for **The Great Eureka Walk** from Eureka Stockade in Ballarat to Eureka, 4 km south of Castlemaine, over 2 days, Saturday Dec 3 and Sunday Dec 4. The distance is approx. 100 km and starting times are 5 am and 6am on the two days, finishing at 7 pm, at Daylesford on the Saturday and Eureka on the Sunday.

Festival Walks

The Club has again agreed to hold walks during the State Festival. It was decided to have two different ones. The one on the first Saturday of the Festival will be at the Kalimna Walking Track at 10 am and the second on the last Saturday at Wattle Flat, leaving Youngmans Track corner at 2 pm.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

N.B. Excursions leave promptly at times stated.

Note that the general meetings are now held at Continuing Education, Templeton Street.

Fri Aug 12 **Western Australia.** Winston Huggins 8.00pm, Continuing Education.

Sat Aug 13 **Tennyson for Birds.** Excursion to the north. Leave outside 27 Doveton St at 11 am. Take lunch as well as afternoon tea. Leader, R. Mills

Thur Aug 18 **U3A/FNC Birdwatching.** Meet Cont. Ed. car park at 9.30am. Leader G. Broadway.

Sun Sept 4 **Little Whipstick.** All day excursion to Mt Edgerton area with Ballarat F.N.C. Meet outside 13 Mostyn St (CHIRP) at 9.30 am, or corner of Daylesford/Geelong Rd, and old Western H'way at 10.30 am.

Fri Sept 9 **Northern Australia.** Pat Bingham.

Sat Sept 10 **Norwood Hill** using the F.N.C. Booklet for the area. Leader, C. Morris.

Sun. Sept. 12 **Great Dividing Trail Walk** For details see p.7

Thurs. Sept 15. **U3A/FNC Birdwatching.** Meet in Continuing Ed. carpark 9.30 am. Leader C. Morris.

Sun Oct 2 **Victorian F.N.C. outing to Castlemaine,** taking in Kalimna, the Botanical Gardens and Kaweka. Meet at ¼ to 11 at the Market.

Sat. Oct. 8 **Great Dividing Trail Walk.** For details see p. 7.

Fri. Oct 14 **"Some Reflections of a Famous Naturalist's Castlemaine Relatives"** Speaker is Daryl Fleay.

Sat. Oct 15 **Mts Barker and Alexander, and Sutton Grange,** looking for raptors. Leader C. Morris.

Sat Nov 19 **Peacock Track.** All day excursion to Talbot/Almherst area with Maryborough F.N.C. Leave 27 Doveton St at 11am. Meet Maryborough F.N.C. at 12 noon on the corner of the Maryborough/Talbot road, and Blacksmiths' Gully Road.

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

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 - 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.