

# Castlemaine Naturalist

May 1994

Vol 18.4 # 200



## From Barkers Creek

Native Animals observed here over our 18 years of residence.

(Wyn and Max Palmer live in Specimen Gully Road in Barkers Creek.)

Koala - on and off throughout our time of residence: latest observation, March '94.

Grey Kangaroo - a mob, 1 male and 6 or 7 females, seen fairly often to late 70's and early 80's, but seldom since then.

Swamp Wallabies - off and on throughout our residency: latest sighting April '94.

Sugar Gliders - reside here in our logs, have done so from very early on, i.e. the 70's.

Brush-tailed Phascogales (Tuans) - first found in log, and later bred here ('86). May still be here, scat found '94.

Echidnas - very active in Pine Plantation; seen on track in '92 and earlier behind our block.

Brush-tailed Possums - one has been a permanent resident in one of our logs for a number of years.

Ringtailed Possum - drey (ball shaped leaf nest) in a tree on the sharp bend in Ironbark track in the plantation, and 1 dead young on the ground at the house.

Bush-rat - caught in possum traps, species not known.

Also Bluetongue and Stumpy-tail (including 3 young ones on the Ironbark Track) Lizards, Bearded and Tree Dragons, various little skinks and some long tailed geckos which live in the frame of the window in the kitchen.

## Bird Observations, Easter '94

Several Spotted Quail-thrushes seen near Chewton (Tunnel area)(Russell and Rob Palmer)

White-browed Scrub-wren drinking at our bird table (2 or 3 times since then, too).

Wyn Palmer.

Wyn has been a faithful contributor to the newsletter since the early days of the club. Ed

# THE CASTLEMAINE PLANT LIST

The first edition of the Castlemaine Plant list was published in January 1983, and listed 751 species for the district. For the first few editions, a master was made, and about 30 copies were produced using a photocopier.

Now, each plant list is printed as demand arises, so each copy is up-to-date when printed. The current edition is edition 9.07, and includes 936 species. So we have added species at the rate of a little over one a month.

The list is in the form of a computer database. A typical entry is

```
Name [Acacia paradoxa           ] Ex [ ]
C_name [Hedge Wattle           ]
Family [Mimosaceae             ] C_family [Wattle             ]
C [D] X [ ]
Area_dist [ABCDEFGHJKLMNQRSTUWVWXYhjnpuvw0123456789 ]
Area_misc [BDOadu              ]
Grd [777]
Note [7 & cF]
Syn [Acacia armata             ]
Map_ref [ ]
Description [Shrub. Spines at leaf bases.             ]
Comment [Excellent bird habitat. Also called Kangaroo Thorn ]
```

The fields include the following

*Name and Common Name:*

*Ex:* Introduced plants are shown by \* (or + for non-local natives)

*C:* D indicates a dicotyledon.

*X:* Sometimes we have rare plants that we do not wish to publicise. An entry here will suppress its appearance on a list, if this is desired.

*Area\_misc:* Blocks of public land are shown with letters A, B etc. So Hedge Wattle has been recorded for Mt Alexander, Barkers Creek, Chewton (The Monk region), Irishtown etc. A list of the areas covered is available on request.

*Area\_misc:* We also include other areas of interest. Hedge Wattle has been recorded at Brisbane Ranges, Dargile Reserve, One-tree Hill, McKenzie Reserve (at Alexandra), Mt Doran (near Mt Warrenheip) and Bungal Forest (near Ballan). These entries do not usually get printed in the standard plant list.

*Grd:* Records for the 9 local 10 minute grids are also included. An entry 777 shows it has been recorded for each of the nine grids.

*Note:* 7 shows that a specimen is in the Castlemaine FNC herbarium, a specimen has been lodged at the National Herbarium in Melbourne, and that I also have a pressed specimen (or a photograph). So anyone who wishes to check up on this entry knows where a sample can be inspected. & indicates that there has been a name change since the publication of the two volumes of "Plants in Victoria", and cF means "common in Forests".

*Syn:* Acacia armata is an earlier name for this plant.

*Map\_ref:* For some specimens, a sample map reference is included. In time, a reference may be available for all species.

*Description:* Brief description. There is limited space.

*Comment:* A comment has been included for some entries.

It is possible to print out any of this information in any desired order. For example, before last month's excursion, I printed out a plant list in alphabetical order for each of the blocks I thought we would visit. These lists included name, common name, family and whether or not native. In the Prison Farm block we have 87 species recorded, 54 species in the Gravel Reserve and 76 in the southern Walmer Flora Reserve. Unfortunately, after this effort, I was not able to go to the excursion. The lists were in alphabetical order (of name), but just as easily, it could have been in family order, or order of common name. And any other information about the plants could have been included, such as the description, or synonym.

This week I had a request for "a list of all of the introduced plants found in the local forests". Again, a simple job for the computer.

You can get a print out of whatever you desire, or have it printed to a computer disk where it can be accessed by a word processor. A line of print can take no more than about 130 characters, so there are limits as to what can be printed in tabular form. The 130 character limit across the page is the main reason for keeping the information concise.

A very handy print-out has name only, printed 4-columns to a page, so the list is very compact, and easy to carry on a bush walk.

New entries are easy to add. It is easy, too, to add another area of interest. Recently a new area was added - an isolated, and rather interesting block of the Wombat Forest, north of Trentham.

Some statistics for edition 9.07 are

Number of areas (main list): 72 (A-Z, a-z and 0-9)

Number of indigenous species: 617

Number of non-indigenous species: 316

Number of families: 104

Number of area records: 9976

Number of 10 minute grid records: 3325

As soon as edition 9.07 is sold, I will print edition 9.08, with several new species records, a new family, and dozens of additional area and grid records.

E.P.

from #53, Dec '80

RAY'S CORNER Historical notes from Ray Bradfield

(From the files of the "Mount Alexander Mail")

Large Emu March 11, 1859. On Thursday last, an emu of the largest size was shot by a Mr Richardson, on the Bendigo Road, about half-way between Sawpit Gully (now Elphinstone), and Harcourt. The bird got into a paddock from which it was prevented from escaping by the dogs. Their barking attracted the attention of their master, and on discovering the cause, he got a gun, and soon despatched the intruder.

Some idea of the magnitude of this emu may be found when it is stated that it measured seven feet three inches from beak to claws, and weighed fifty-seven pounds. We believe that the emu is a very rare bird in the vicinity of Castlemaine, and especially one of such unusually large proportions as that noticed.

## Nest Boxes at Sandon

We set up a number of nest boxes in trees surrounding our house at Sandon, beginning in October 1991. We followed various published designs, generally favouring a construction in marine plywood in a size supposedly suited to Eastern Rosellas.

The forest around our house is of box/stringy bark type on higher ground, with light under-story, on poor shaly soil. It lies on former farmland but has been little disturbed apart from occasional logging which has removed most old trees. Some old trees survive, generally in weak health, with obvious wounds and fissures. We did not believe that there was a serious lack of bird and mammal habitat on our land, but were interested in being able to observe activities more closely. At present we have put up 22 boxes altogether, and plan maybe a few more.

Some results obtained so far may be of interest.

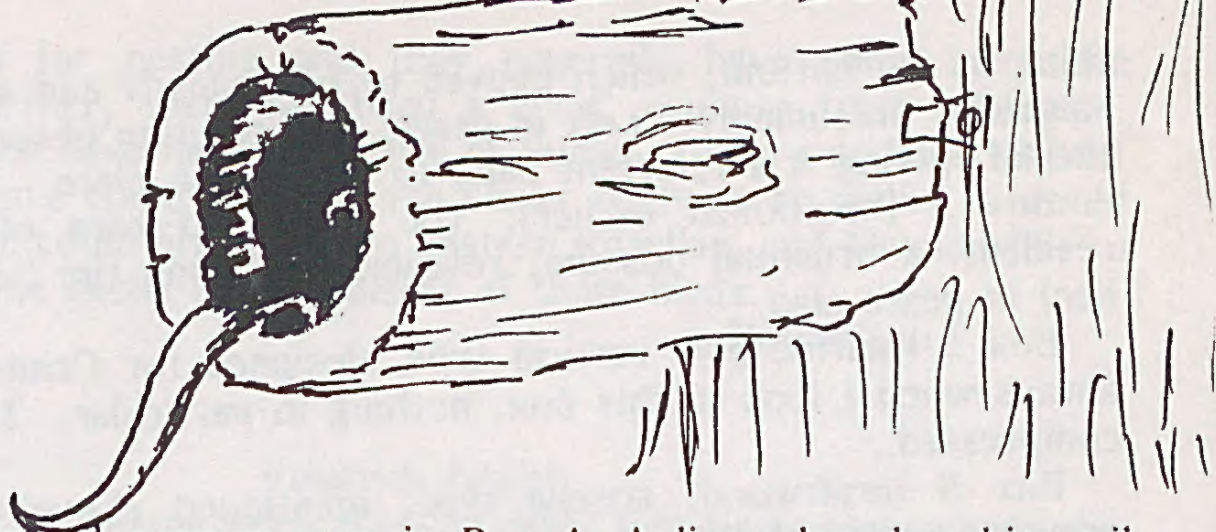
March '92 (Box 1, vertical, cross section about 80x80mm, marine ply, top-front opening about 70mm, intended for tree creepers): The head of an "animal" seen at entrance. Either a sugar glider or an owlet nightjar; we really could not get a good enough view to decide which. Its habit of sitting at the entrance for hours at a time indicated that it was unlikely to be a nocturnal mammal. Eventually we were convinced by a friend that it was an owlet nightjar.

But there is more! After a time there was no more activity. On April 11 I made a survey of boxes so far constructed, in the late afternoon. On being disturbed, this one disgorged, not an owlet nightjar, but two sugar-gliders. One ran up the tree trunk and looked down at me; the other obligingly made a short jump-glide to a neighbouring trunk and ran up that, so that I had seen an animal glide for my first time. In later days the nightjar returned and was seen until July.

April '92: (Box 2, marine ply similar to Box 1): Lifting the lid disclosed the top of a large head bowed in sleep a few inches from the top. Brushtail possum. Subsequently often observed through the hole in the front, where an ear or a paw might appear, as the box seems really somewhat small. Some months later still we saw presumably the same possum crowded in there with a young one, with paws etc. constantly sticking out (November '92.)

April '92 (Box 4, vertical hollow log section, hole at top front): An owlet nightjar appears occasionally and is heard calling. Not the same individual as in Box 1; colour lighter. Subsequently, while the box was empty I enlarged the hole but no owlet nightjar was seen to use it again, although a ringtail possum was seen several times.

August '92 (Box 8, craftwood, similar to N<sup>o</sup> 1 but larger inside, section 150x150mm): An Eastern Rosella seen inspecting the box. Later (Jan. '93) a clutch of 4 eggs was seen, but there was no further result that season, the box seemingly abandoned.



Feb. '93: Ringtail possum seen in Box 4, A limp, largely white tail dangles out of hole, making one wonder why it bothers with the box at all, since a passing predator could just haul on the tail. Possibly the limp tail is atypical. The same ring-tail, probably, seen later in Box 13, a horizontal log open at front; at any rate, a limp white tail was once again hanging out. The animal itself not hard to see further inside.

Box 1: Owlet nightjar again seen, resident for some weeks, I believe these birds invariably reveal themselves during the day by calling and sunning themselves at the entrance. A silent box means no bird.

My notes indicate no observations for the next 12 months.

March '94 (Boxes 10 and 11, horizontal logs, with 30 mm entrances at end): These were taken down for examination and refitting. Both contained fairly recent gum-leaf sprays, indicating use by sugar-gliders. One was replaced much as it was, the other was modified by adding some 30 mm plastic pipe to suit the pardalotes the boxes were intended for.

A general inspection of boxes was made.

Box 1: no obvious residues from known occupancy by sugar gliders and nightjars.

Box 3: (a craftwood affair intended to attract sugar-gliders, big enough to breed in): No contents except a solitary dropping, possibly of ringtail or bush rat. Grass at bottom quite undisturbed.

Box 15: (open topped vertical log about 350mm, 120 mm in diameter, installed Aug '93): Bark litter levelled and compressed; not checked carefully for droppings etc.

While I was inspecting this box a flock of choughs passed by, and a sentry bird, apparently not accustomed to men in trees, approached, rattling, to within 1 metre.

Box 14 (vertical log, top-front entrance): The box was taken down for refitting and contents examined. Recent eucalyptus leaves, bird droppings, possum droppings, a sizable dark pellet containing insect parts, white fragments of 1 or possible 2 rosella eggs, some small feathers. I concluded that at some stage an Eastern Rosella had tried to nest in it but had been dislodged by a ringtail or sugar-gliders. An owlet nightjar might well have been part of the passing traffic.

Box 9 (vertical log, top-front entrance): A dark brown baseball sized

thing in the bottom, which proved to be a slowly and slightly breathing ringtail - presumably. Left in peace. No reaction observed as I refitted the lid, giving it a reluctant bang to settle it in place.

Box 2 (mentioned earlier): The scalp and ears of the customary resident, a brushtail possum, revealed on lifting the lid. Left him (or her) in peace also.

Box 5 (marine ply, vertical type, designed for Crimson Rosella): As always when I look in this box, nothing in particular. Debris in bottom compressed.

Box 8 (craftwood, rosella type, mentioned above): The site of a previous uncompleted nesting, this box now reveals a family tragedy. No fewer than five dead Eastern Rosellas pulled out, the bottom one or two longer dead than the others. One at least is adult, the others, from what remains, seem fairly well fledged. There is some white fungussy growth at the top of the box, which can be scraped off, leaving clean timber. The bottom of the box is filthy; it seems rosellas are not house-proud. Microbial activity in the pile of droppings has eaten away the floor. Is it possible that the box, designed to add habitat, is a net killer of this species?

Box 12: (a little squarish box with a front-side entrance and fore-ledge, hanging on twine from a bough.): Its appearance is so incongruous that I removed it to a deeper location in the forest, for shame. It is the kind of thing you might try in a canary cage.

At all events, I approached it by ladder and gave it a tentative tap. Nothing. I shook it a bit. Nothing. Then I tipped it sideways. Little hard droppings came out. (Now what do you think about that?) I got a torch and a mirror. Sure enough, once I could see into the back corner, a bat was revealed, clinging fast. I thought it was a Little Forest Bat, but on later evidence I incline to Little Mastiff. I left it no further disturbed, of course. Looking again on subsequent days revealed the box empty; but it happens that today (19th April) the box was again inhabited - by the same bat as likely as not.

Box 6 : (a divided log, quite large, standing about 1 m high atop another log, near a dam) : An Eastern Rosella was seen about this box and two eggs were noticed, but the box seemed to have been disturbed by possums and the eggs were broken.

Because of the presumed possum problem the experiment has been tried of hanging this box on twine from a bough. The location is cooler than of box 8, and the box more commodious; let us hope for no more tragedies.

Why some boxes are neglected by all species and some seem to be vigorously competed for is an interesting question. Location is obviously important. It is sobering to relate that so far, with all 22 boxes available, there has not been a successful bird nesting. On the other hand, one must recall that there are few local bird species which

require hollows for nesting and they generally have some attractive alternatives. Further, there has been a good response from mammals, and we would not have had experience of Sugar-Gliders or bats without the boxes, or have come to know the Owlet Nightjar so well. It would be an asset if we could attract more Eastern Rosellas, and I would like to know more of the needs and problems of these birds.

Bob Webb

### Rotamah Island

I must admit to having been there at least five times, but where else in Victoria can you spend as many days as you choose on an island, 5kms long by 1 km wide, in company with birds, kangaroos, deer and bats in the midst of wetlands and woodlands with well covered dunes smoothing out the noise of the ocean breakers in the background.

This is Rotamah, a naturalists delight on the seaward side of the Gippsland Lakes where a bird observatory run by the RAOU provides accommodation in a former farmhouse and residential wardens take care of meals as well as advising on walks and leading fieldwork studies.

At different times there are bird and bat banding, reptile, wetland sketching and other forms of natural history weekend courses.

There are breeding colony sites of the rare and endangered Little Tern in the vicinity and walks along the 90 mile beach (not the whole way) can occasionally turn up other finds such as a Leopard Seal and beach washed oceanic birds. Sandy, gently undulating tracks through the bush offer good birding opportunities as more than 190 species have been recorded on the island and large rafts of water birds can be viewed from the observatory or along the shoreline walks. The resident White-bellied Sea Eagle, either singularly or with family, is probably my favourite sighting.

Chris Morris

### Sandon Bird List for March

Little Pied Cormorant	Kookaburra
White-faced Heron	Welcome Swallow
Little Eagle	Richard's Pipit
Brown Falcon	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Masked Lapwings	Scarlet Robin
Common Bronzewing	Jacky Winter
Galah	Golden Whistler
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Rufous Whistler
Crimson Rosella	Grey Shrike-thrush
Eastern Rosella	Restless Flycatcher
Fan-tailed Cuckoo 14/3	Grey Fantail
Southern Boobook (h)	Willie Wagtail
Australian Owlet Nightjar	Wrens

Speckled Warbler  
Weebill  
Brown,  
Buff-rumped,  
Yellow-rumped  
Yellow and  
Striated Thornbills  
White-throated Tree-creeper  
Red Wattlebird  
Yellow-faced,  
White-eared,  
Yellow-tufted,  
Fuscous,

White-plumed,  
Brown Headed and  
White-naped Honeyeaters  
Spotted Pardalote  
Striated Pardalote  
Red-browed Firetail  
Diamond Firetail  
White-winged Choughs  
Australian Magpie-lark  
Magpie  
Grey Currawong  
Australian Raven

#### Animals

A Yellow-footed Antechinus ran 20foot up a stringybark. Later was seen peeping out of a bird box, also drinking at the bird bath.

Ring-tailed Possum

Brush-tailed Possum

Bat seen in bat box

Tuan caught in a rat trap on nearby farming property

(Fox)

Susanna Starr

#### Bird Observers at Maldon

During the week April 11-15 a group of Bird Observers Club members were staying in Maldon at Derby Hill, and Maggie Oliver was responsible for their outings, so, of course, she needed company. The weather was reasonable and although the birds were not plentiful we had some highlights. At the back of Tarrengower Maggie and I were busy planning the next move and drove past the others to take the lead and soon realized we had lost our followers - someone saw two bush curlew with wing bands and the others had all stopped. We missed out.

The next day we took them to the L.C.C. reserve behind the old schoolhouse at Walmer and after a quiet start there were many Black-chinned Honeyeaters. The Little Friarbird which had been seen the previous Saturday was also there.

On Thursday at Tullaroop someone found two regent Honeyeaters and I think that every one in the group finally saw them.

At lunchtime on Friday we came down from the Red White and Blue mine to the nearby dam. On a small island near the fence there was a dirty cream bird which was difficult at first to see, but was later identified as an immature Darter.

Later, while energetic members walked up Mount Tarrengower I wandered around and eventually found a burnt log overlooking a clump of trees with very little vegetation at their bases. I sat there for 30 minutes or more and was rewarded with constant sightings of small birds



- Willie Wagtails, Scissors Grinders, Wrens, Scarlet Robin and female, Buff-tailed Thornbills and Speckled Warblers.

Kay Turner

### Chough Family at Expedition Pass

Over the summer period a family of White-winged Choughs, including juveniles, have been observed at Expedition Pass regularly feeding under the magnificent specimen of Bhutan Pine (White Himalayan Pine) in the area below the retaining wall. Presumably they find the seeds from the numerous large cones on the ground most appetizing.

S.P.

### **Batting at Lake Weeroona, March 30**

Strange antics in the well lit picnic shelter near Lake Weeroona soon after dark! Figures darting about as though caged in by an invisible net, occasionally clustering at some object of interest --- spasmodic flashes of yellow light!

In spite of what passers-by may have thought there was nothing of the occult about proceedings there between the highway and the lake that evening. Just a well organised study of the local bat population conducted by the Bendigo Mammal Survey Group. At least six Castlemaine Field Nats took part.

We were still enjoying our barbecues and picnic teas when the first well prepared workers began hanging almost invisible netting right around the open sided pavilion.

Mr Bill Holsworth gave us a very interesting talk on bats in general and the resident species - Gould's Wattled Bat (*Chalinolobus gouldii*) - in particular. It seems they live in the same colonies year after year. He mentioned some which had been released in previous years as far away as Bridgewater, yet had been found next evening back at the customary roost.

In the gathering dusk, sometime after sunset, the bats began to take off from their "roost", their daytime hiding-place/bedroom, and flying straight into the netting. Sometimes considerable patience and skill had to be used to extricate an individual which had got a wing or even both wings through the netting. The experienced members of the group were quickly on hand with small individual cloth bags to put the captives in until the hue and cry died down, indicating that the whole colony had left the roost.

They were taken to Bill's Kombivan mobile laboratory/office where he expertly inspected each one, recording the information about those already banded so that they could be released, and returning the unbanded few to their snug prisons until they could be more thoroughly inspected next day. There seemed to be a constant queue-up of participants, including several children, all of us eager for the privilege of holding the tiny, warm, velvety creatures for the moment or two that

they each needed to become aware of their freedom to flit off into the darkness.

I think the number of unbanded individuals kept for further study next day was eight. Shirley Parnaby learned by phone from Bill since that these were all juveniles and not yet old enough for definite determination of their sex. They had, of course, been banded and released.

Of particular interest, at least to novices like me, is the fact that the thirty-six (?) already wearing the tiny metal tags on their wings were all females! One had been banded in 1983 so had obviously lived around the area for at least ten years.

Bats are remarkable creatures. I believe that there is still much to be learned about them and their unique way of life.

Stan Bruton

### Nest Test

#### From the Newsletter of the Hunter Bird Observers Club (N.S.W.)

The Australian Museum nest test was organised to try to find out what the common nest predators are in cities, how common they are, whether human activities affect their behaviour, which areas have the highest predation risk, and what habitat features have an important impact on predation rate. The experiment ran for two weeks in September '93 and 2000 people participated, of which 90% returned their observations. The overall rate of predation was 64% , and it was shown that predators are very active around human settlement compared with National Parks around Sydney, which had been shown to be 42% in an earlier study.

Participants were sent a nest made of half a tennis ball containing two white artificial eggs firmly attached. They were asked to site it with care and inspect twice daily for predator damage to eggs.

Big birds were the most common culprits, and small birds accounted for most of the remainder, with cats, rats and possums playing only a minor part. (Rats had accounted for 25% of predation in a previous experiment in National Parks) Of the big birds currawongs were the most common predator. Others included magpies, kookaburras, ravens and butcher-birds. Noisy Miner was the most commonly observed small bird.

The survey showed that people who fed meat to kookaburras were more likely to have their nest preyed on than those who did not. The importance of shrubs to protect small birds is implied by the correlation between nest height and predation intensity, because higher nests suffered greater predation than lower ones.

Three strong recommendations came out of the survey. One is the desirability of converting lawns into shrubberies - particularly hakeas to provide protection and grevilleas to provide food. The second is to reduce the number of introduced berry producing plants like privet, camphor laurel and cotoneaster - largely because currawongs feed on

these. The third is not to encourage large birds into the garden by feeding them.

The Australian Museum nest test will go ahead again next breeding season but not with artificial nests. People with real nests in their gardens will be able to record their observations on data sheets prepared by the R.A.O.U.

Adapted and contributed by Shirley Parnaby.

Anyone willing to help visitors to town who are interested in Natural History, helping either by directing them to places to see, or accompanying them, please ring Barbara (72 4354) or Margaret (72 1429).

### Some Observations for April

Ravens drinking at the waterdish in Kennedy Street. (B.M.)

Royal Spoonbills, as well as Yellow-billed, at Joyces Ck. on Cairn Curran. (R.M.)

Wedgetail (S.B.) and Common Mynahs (G.B.) at Muckleford.

Black Shouldered Kite at Little Bendigo. (C.M.)

### Eighteen Years and 200 Issues later....

Back in April 1976 our first newsletter appeared, two months after the inaugural meeting. It consisted of only 4 pages, and was typed, a stencil was cut on a scanner and then it was run off on an ink Gestetner at the High School. The first page appears in this newsletter. I had to reduce it as it was printed on foolscap paper in those days.

Over the years we have built up to a regular 8 pages, with occasionally 12 pages or four pages when our contributors have been lax - not often! Usually we have printed between 60 and 75 copies each month.

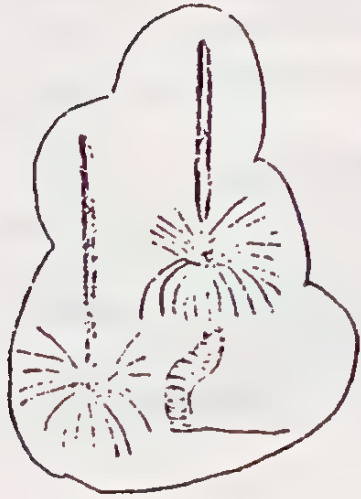
The magazine reflects the changing interests of the Club. Once flowers and plants dominated, now it is birds. Geology, and mineral springs; mammals; reptiles; astronomy; L.L.C.concerns and surveys; holidays to places which will interest naturalists; and how to cope with weeds in the series "If you can't beat 'em, eat 'em" have all been featured over the years, too.

Ern Perkins, George Broadway and Rita Mills have all been editors of the "Castlemaine Naturalist", as it came to be called from the second issue in May '76, with Ern being the first to take the job on.

Contributors among the Club members play an important part. It's these contributions, no matter how small, that make the magazine.

The Sugar Glider, which was used on the front page because they are mentioned in more than one article this month, is actually an illustration from the 100th issue, which George edited.

Rita Mills, editor 1994.



CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

NEWS SHEET      APRIL 1976      NUMBER 1

President: Mr R. Bradfield  
Secretary: Mrs R. Mills  
Treasurer: Mr L. Bransgrove

General meetings on the third Wednesday of the month in the Castlemaine Education Centre (21 Mostyn St) at 8.00 pm.

April Meeting April 21st.  
Speaker will be Mr A. Hartup - subject is "Local Birds and Flowers"

April Excursion will be to Bells Swamp, on the Dunolly road. Meet at the Education Centre at 1.30 on Sunday 15th April. Subject - swamp plants and water birds.

Committee Members

Vice Presidents: Mr G. Broadway and Mr G. Sitch.  
Mr and Mrs M Winterbottom, Miss J. Chapman and Mr E. Perkins.

Subscription

Family: \$5  
Single: \$3  
Junior/student: \$1

-----  
ITEMS FROM THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Financial Receipts(subs) total 171; expenses to date (secretarial) \$17.48.

Records Officer Mr Winterbottom has been appointed records officer. We hope to develop a card system to record items of interest  
Reports and Exhibits It is planned to make members reports and observations an item at each meeting. A table will be set up for exhibits etc.

Members are asked to contribute to both of these.

Committee Meetings to be on the 1st Thursday of each month at the Education Centre.

Affiliation The committee suggests that we affiliate at this stage with the Western Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association, a with the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Constitution It is suggested that the following be added to the proposed constitution

2c Add "and environment"

8a Add another sentence: "The executive consists of the five key officers"

News Sheet It was decided to produce a news sheet on trial. Printing costs will be 4 cents a copy. Postage costs would make distribution by post uneconomical. Mr Perkins to produce the sheet.

IF YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM, EAT THEM One of a series

## CLEAVERS (*Galium aparine*)

Cleavers is a trailing plant with the leaves arranged in rings of 6 - 8 leaves. The leaves and the seed pods covered with hooked hairs. This feature is responsible for some of the other common names, such as "huggy-me-close", "sticky Willie", and "clinging sweethearts".

Cleavers is reputed to make a good vegetable. The hooked hairs melt away when cooked, and so the young leaves and stems can be boiled and eaten as a vegetable. The seeds may be roasted and ground, to make a coffee substitute.



In some countries, the bristly stems have been used to filter milk.

It is a member of the woodruff family. Native species are fairly common in the local bush. They are much smaller and less robust than cleavers. The name 'Galium' is said to come from the Greek word 'gala', meaning milk - from the supposed use of Cleavers to curdle milk. 'Aparine' is another word for bedstraw.

Cleaves is quite common in waste places, such as corners of back yards, or weed-infested roadsides. Its use as a vegetable is to be encouraged, as this might lead to over-collection, and hence its disappearance from some of its haunts.

from #135, June '88

### A Note From Barkers Creek

Why, do you suppose, when we woke to 30mm of rain in the gauge and still raining, did we find a pair of our resident sugar-gliders sound asleep on the outside of their log, one spread-eagled under the opening, the other half way out, draped head-first over the top of him!

Were they enjoying the welcome rain, or trying to dry out before going to bed? Either way, at 8 am they scrambled inside.

We had noticed one looking out occasionally when we used a hose nearby over recent weeks.

Wyn Palmer

## RED-BROWED TREECREEPER AT DAYLESFORD.

from #174, Dec '91

At the conclusion of the recent outing to Tipperary Springs at Daylesford I was left to hitch a ride home with Kaye who already had our guests Pat and Jane with her. Instead of immediately following the general exodus from the springs area, we wandered along the creek, possibly with the idea of finding the mother Black Duck with her brood which Kaye and I had seen earlier. So it was that I found myself gazing at a smallish dark bird which seemed to be busy on a fallen log which, like the surrounding trees, had been blackened by a fairly recent fire. Realising that the bird was not the usual white-throated variety I was very thankful that Pat was nearby, and when I called her over she immediately confirmed my suspicion that it was in fact a Red-browed Treecreeper. At that we called Jane and Kaye to look but at that the bird took off into the bush. "Never fear", said Pat, "it will return". And sure enough, so it did. In a most obliging manner it came and perched on the side of a blackened tree, at about one metre from the ground, so that its full profile was displayed for us to admire. It remained in that position for what seemed like minutes while we all had an extremely good look.

I thought at first that we were outside the usual range, or at least on the edge. However, the Atlas records that there is a small isolated population in the Macedon-Daylesford area.

G. Broadway.

from #15 July '77

## LEGEND OF THE WARATAH

Long ago in the dreamtime there was an aboriginal girl called Krubi Krubi. She made herself a cloak from the red skins of the rock wallaby and trimmed it with red feathers from the crests of the gang-gang cockatoos.

She loved a young aboriginal hunter. He was far enough removed in blood relationship for them to marry. She would watch for his return from hunting from a cleft between two sandstone rocks on the top of a ridge. The young man always looked for her cloak as he returned.

But one day another tribe trespassed on the Burraborang territory and the young men went off to fight them. Krubi stood at the sandstone cleft watching and waiting. She heard the cries of battle and she saw the men come back, but her lover was not among them. Krubi stayed for seven days waiting and her tears watered the ground so that seeds of wildflowers began to sprout. The she went back to the camp. It was abandoned and the ashes of the fires were seven days cold. So Krubi returned to her sandstone look-out and willed herself to die.

Later there appeared a beautiful flower. The stalk was tall and straight, just like the man Krubi died for. The serrated leaves had points like his spear and the flower was as red as Krubi's red cloak. The aboriginals called it "Waratah"-a tree with red flowers.

Contributed by J. Chapman.

## BROWN STRINGYBARK AT MUCKLEFORD

I have visited the boronia patch in the Muckleford forest many times. The whole area was burned a few years ago, and the boronias are recovering quite well, even though the growth rate is rather slow.

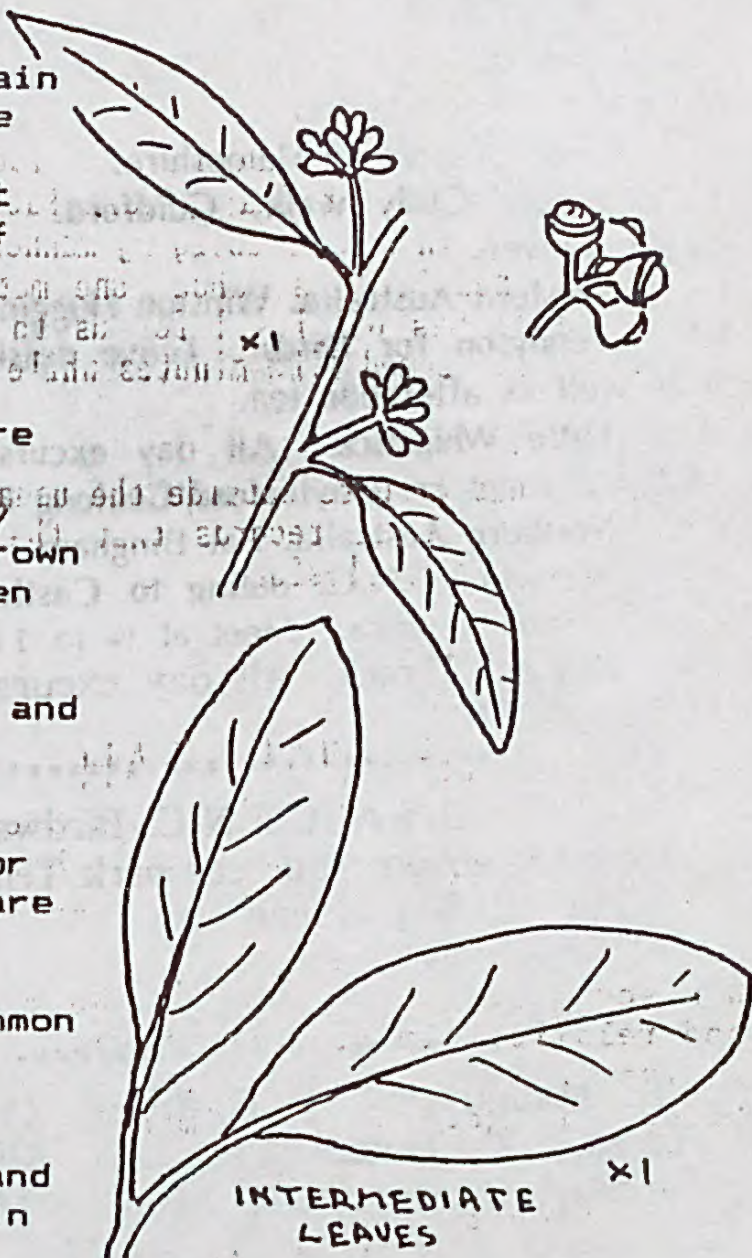
I was surprised when visiting the area again early in June, to see how the boronias are faring to notice that there are a number of Brown Stringybarks growing amongst the Ironbarks.

Brown Stringybarks are rather uncommon near Castlemaine. The only other places where Brown Stringybarks have been recorded for this district are in the Smith's Reef Forest, and along the Porcupine Ridge Road.

Brown Stringybarks (or *Eucalyptus baxteri*) are rather similar in appearance to the locally much more common Red Stringybark.

However, the caps on Brown Stringybark flowers are rounded and often almost warty, in comparison with the pointed and twisted caps of Red Stringybark. Brown Stringybark also has dark green, very thick leathery juvenile leaves. It is this feature that makes Brown Stringybark easy to recognise. It is surprising that such a tree should be unrecognised in such a frequently visited area.

Although Brown Stringybark is rather uncommon in our district, it is much more common further south. It is widespread through the Grampians and in the Otway area.



## CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

\*Excursions leave promptly at the times stated.

- Fri May 13 Paddling to Papua New Guinea Katie Reid. 8 p.m. at the Junior Campus, C.S.C. (former High School), Lawson Parade.
- Sat May 14 Mt Cameron to Mt Greenock and Mt Glasgow. Part of the Major Mitchell Trail. Birds and exploring. Leader, Rita Mills. Leave outside 13 Mostyn St. (old S.E.C.) 1.30pm.
- Fri June 10 A Bushwalker's View of Tasmania Athol Dorman
- Sat June 11 Environmental Survey Pt 2. Leave outside 13 Mostyn St (old SEC) at 1.30pm. Leader Chris Morris
- Fri July 8 Four Seasons in Hampshire.
- Sat July 9 Shicer Gully walk, Cuidford. Leave cars at Hilltop Nursery. Leader, Maggie Oliver.
- Fri Aug 12 Western Australia. Winston Huggins
- Sat Aug 13 Tennyson for Birds. Leave outside 27 Doveton St at 11 a.m. Take lunch as well as afternoon tea.
- Sun Sept 4 Little Whipstick All day excursion to Mt Edgerton area with Ballarat F.N.C.. Meet cr. Daylesford/Geelong Rd, old Western Hwy, 10.30am.
- Fri Sept 9 Northern Australia. Pat Bingham.
- 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 Nov 19 Peacock Track. All day excursion to Talbot/Amherst area with Maryborough FNC.

\*\*\*\*\*

### U.3.A./C.F.N.C. Birdwatching

- Thurs May 19 Meet at Cont. Ed. car park Templeton St at 9.30am.  
Leader, Peg Munro.
- Thurs June 16 Meet as above.

\*\*\*\*\*

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

Meetings: Second Friday each month (except Jan) at the Junior Campus C.S.C., Lawson Pde. at 8 pm.

Business meetings are held on the 4th Thursday (except Dec.) at 38 Campbell St. at 7.30pm. All Members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions 1994 Ordinary Membership: Single \$14, Fam. \$20

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

Newsletter posted: Membership + \$6

Please check that your Sub has been paid.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club

P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine. 3450