

# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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## THE CHANGING YEARS

Having lived in the same place - or within 200 metres of my childhood home - all my life, I've noticed quite a few changes in the birdlife over the years. I can remember when I was about 12 seeing a Regent Honeyeater with its black and gold plumage on the bend in Barkers Creek over the railway-line from the house. We used to cross the paddock, and go under the line and the road via the culverts to swim in a shallow hole in the creek there. We only saw the bird a few times but I decided that it was the Regent Honeyeater using the old "What Bird is That?". The illustration in Simpson and Day verified it for me years later.



A family of "Leather-heads" or Noisy Friar-birds nested in a clump of trees down on the creek in the paddock over the road from ours. I used to often hear them, and see them too as I walked past when I was going to school, but eventually the trees were removed for some reason, and the birds departed. A year or two ago we had a group of two or three here for 3 or 4 months, but again, they've moved on and not returned.

Next to our wood yard Dad had cut down a few of the regrowth trees, and in the new growth one year we saw a flock of Diamond Firetails on several occasions, but we never saw them again either. It was about that time that we were visited by a young (Dad said it was a young one) Brown Bittern. It had landed near the fence in our back yard, and we had to be warned not to get too close to that sharp, upward pointing beak! It was gone next day, and I can only conclude that it had got back its strength and flown off.

One of my favourite sounds as a child was the chiming of the "Bell Magpies" as we called the Grey Currawongs, but they disappeared for years. A pair turned up again in 1968 and nested in the bush behind the house. I was thrilled to hear them again, and then to realise they had chosen our bush for their nest site. They arrived again the next year with the family and nested up the back again, but the second pair nested further up towards Barkers Creek. I heard a few years later in about 1972 that a pair had turned up in Barkers Creek and had nested near the school. This year for the first time we had Pied Currawongs near the house, and I have to admit I don't really want them back, as I prefer my shy Greys to the bombastic Pies.

About 35 years ago many of the trees in the paddock opposite where we live

now were cut down as the new owners wanted to put a few cows on the land, and of course that opened the bush up a bit more. After only a very few years we began to see Galahs feeding in the paddock, and later on the first White Cockatoo scouts started flying over. Of recent years we've even had Long-billed Corellas overhead. The White Cockies roost in the trees around the house occasionally, but I have only once or twice seen them feeding on the ground. As for the Galahs, we have our resident family which excavated a hole in the big Yellow Gum in the corner of the back yard over a period of three years, and have now managed to raise two or three broods each year for the last three years. This year there was quite a flock around the tree for the house warming (or the squabble over who gets the hollow). I wonder if it's the family coming home?

When we were children the only time we saw Galahs or Cockatoos - we never saw Corellas of any sort - was when we went to visit our Granny who lived at Lyal. We began to see the first Cockatoos when we crossed over Mt Alexander into Sutton Grange.

The more open land that is now around here has attracted the occasional White Ibis, and Masked Lapwings have nested down near the dam in the opposite paddock for about 20 years. The lone White Ibis turned up not much after that, but in the last few weeks we have had two Straw-necked Ibis feeding just through the fence over the road on a couple of occasions. With the dam being built, we have had Black Duck, Maned Geese (arrived after the 1982 drought and have built up in numbers from 3 to about 30), a Little Pied Cormorant and occasionally a Yellow-billed Spoonbill.

When we were children, one of the big thrills of a trip to Daylesford, which was a big event in itself!, was seeing "Red Lowries" - Crimson Rosellas. We used to see plenty of Eastern Rosellas, but never the Crimson at home. How things have changed. Now we mostly see Crimson. I'm not sure when they first arrived, but it must have been at least 25 years ago because the children were still quite young. When we were children we raised an Eastern Rosella until he was able to be released. We had taught him to whistle "Pop goes the Weasel" and it was quite amusing to whistle to him and get a reply as he sat in one of the trees at the edge of the bush with his wife and family. He lost his ability to whistle our tune after a couple of years - either that or he thought it was too undignified.

Another bird that has only been around for the last 15 years or so I could do without - in such numbers, anyway - and that is the Red Wattlebird. One year we had a flock of about 30 instead of the usual one or two breeding pairs, and the other birds were constantly bossed and bullied off the property. Blackbirds and Starlings were also strangers when we were children, though there were plenty of Sparrows, more than there are now, but the worst thing I've seen for a long time is the Indian Mynah that arrived a few months back. For once I appreciated the Wattle-birds which sent it on its way.

Rita Mills

## Book Review **TARONGA ZOO'S GUIDE TO THE CARE OF URBAN WILDLIFE.**

*Waldron, E. 1990. Taronga Zoo's Guide to the Care of Urban Wildlife, Allen and Unwin, Sydney. 157 pages. (\$19.95). Reviewed by Marg Hunter.*

This is a book I wish I'd had for the past forty plus years. It's practical, attractive and it answers a vast number of questions which arise suddenly in the normal course of sharing earth with other life. The author is a wildlife rehabilitation officer at Taronga Zoo. Her book uses the accumulated experience and skills of the zoo staff and is designed to "assist the average person who wishes to plan their local environment to sustain healthy wildlife and help the occasional injured or orphaned animal. It also raises questions that all of us should ponder about conservation in general."

The chapter concerning "Providing Food and Shelter" I find particularly useful because it goes beyond the more usual "plant flowering native shrubs and you'll be overwhelmed by a myriad of useful birds....". First it reminds WHY artificial feeding is an issue which must be considered. Factors of total habitat needs and safety are considered. Specific details are given for nest box dimensions, construction detail and suitable erection heights. Lists of vegetation and other materials and situations suitable for nesting etc are suggested.

The "pest control problem" section gives some detail of the ecology of common pests and appropriate alternative remedies including simple recipes. There are ideas for coping with possums in the roof, magpie parents, destructive cockatoos and similar seasonal difficulties.

It is in the chapters concerning emergency treatment for native wildlife and handrearing, that the clear line drawings are exceptionally helpful - e.g. How should you pick up a ..... which has been hit by a vehicle? Included is not just the "what", but the how and when, and how much to feed and comfort a wide range of possible victims. Appendices give contacts throughout the Australian States for further information and products mentioned. There is a useful reading list and to date the index hasn't let me down.

This is a well presented paperback. I particularly liked its wide margins for personal jottings. Colour photographs add to the charm of the book but it is the attractive black and white drawings which partner the substance of the text beautifully and very helpfully. I'd suggest this is a book which should be in the home library. It would be a great present for any naturalist over the age of ten years (or parents or teachers who are not yet nature lovers)! I wrote to the Taronga Zoo for my copy, but I believe it has a wider distribution.

P.S. Don't lend your own copy. It's the sort of book that is so useful it only returns reluctantly.

## SANDON IN SEPTEMBER 1993

Seen at the bird bath were

Crimson Rosellas (pair)	Brown Thornbills	Yellow-faced Honeyeaters
Grey Fantail	Buff-rumped Thornbills	Brown-headed Honeyeaters
Wrens	Striated Thornbills	White-naped Honeyeaters

Seen on the property were

Australasian Grebe (pair)	Welcome Swallows (pair)	Wh-throated Treecreepers (pr)
Australian Shelduck	Richard's Pipit	Brown Treecreeper (29/9/93)
Pacific Black Duck (pair)	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Red Wattlebirds
Maned Duck (pair)	Hooded Robin (pair)	White-eared Honeyeaters
Little Eagle	Eastern Yellow Robin (pr)	Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters
Brown Falcon (pair)	Jacky Winter (pair)	Fuscous Honeyeaters
Masked Lapwing (pair)	Golden Whistler (female	White-plumed Honeyeaters
Galahs (pair)	with 2 immature, 21/9/93)	Spotted pardalotes
Sulphur-crested Cockatoos	Rufous Whistler (pair)	Striated Pardalotes
Eastern Rosellas (pair)	Grey Shrike-thrush (pair)	Silvereyes
Red-rumped Parrots (pair)	Restless Flycatcher	Red-browed Firetails
Pantailed Cuckoos (9/9/93)	Willie Wagtail (pair)	Diamond Firetails
Black-eared Cuckoo (4/9/93)	Speckled Warbler (pair)	Olive-backed Oriole
Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo	Weebills	White-winged Choughs
Shining Bronze Cuckoo	Yellow-rumped Thornbills	Magpies
Southern Boobook Owl (h)	Southern Whiteface	Grey Currawong
Aust. Owlet Nightjar (h)	Varied Sittellas (nesting	Australian Ravens
Kookaburra	17/9/93)	

Susanna Starr

## MOYSTON BUSHLAND RESERVE

Early in September I spent another very pleasant 2 hours wandering around the Moyston Bushland Reserve with grandson, Simon. Moyston, for those who do not know, is about 10 km east of Mt William in the Grampians and on the way to Halls Gap. As it has been here, wattles were dominant, and included the prostrate form of Acacia ?. There were also a few Yellow Stars, Early Nancies, along with Hovea, Tetratheca, Peach Heath, and one very showy Grampians Thryptomene, about 10 km from its nearest neighbour as far as Simon can ascertain. He first found it as a young plant 2 or 3 years ago and it is now about 60 cm high and nearly as wide.

As always there were lots of birds, and as usual when I'm with Simon, I saw far more than I usually do! We set off about past 4, in cold but fine and mainly sunny conditions, and got back just after 6 with a list of 36 species. They were - Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin, Dusky Woodswallow, Magpie, Little Raven, Galah, White Cockatoo, Long-billed Corella, Musk and Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Red-rumped Parrot, Eastern Rosella, Superb Blue Wren, Goldfinch, Red-browed Firetail, Yellow Robin, Eastern Shrike-tit, White-browed Babbler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Golden Whistler, White-throated

Tree-creeper, Brown and Yellow-Rumped Thornbills, Fuscous, White-plumed, New Holland, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and a very good view of a Black-chinned Honeyeater, Willy Wagtail, Restless Flycatcher, Common Bronzewing, Masked Lapwing, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Eagle, and Brown Goshawk. A fortnight before Simon had sighted 3 or 4 Blue-winged Parrots and had an excellent view of them. He only saw them the once, and wonders just what they were doing there as they were way out of their range. The number of them suggest that they weren't aviary escapes.

Rita Mills

## OBSERVATIONS

**SPOTTED QUAIL-THRUSH NESTING AT SANDON.** The Quail-thrush was observed on a friend's property on 3/10.93. Also seen were Musk Duck (pair), 5 Pelicans, Swamp Harrier, Australian Hobby on or near his large lake. (SS)

**BIRDS SEEN AT BELL'S SWAMP** on 23rd Sept included

Australian Grebes	Musk Duck	Musk Lorikeets
White-necked (Pacific) Herons	Dusky Moorhen	Red-rumped parrots
White-faced herons	Eurasian Coot	Welcome Swallows
Sacred Ibis	Masked Lapwings	Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike
Straw-necked Ibis	Little Pied Cormorant	Superb Fairy Wrens
Black Swans	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Willie Wagtail
Pacific Black Duck	Galahs	Grey Shrike-thrush
Maned (Wood) Duck	Long-billed Corellas	Magpies

Bells Swamp is full, following good rain. (MO)

**POVERTY TRACK PLANT LIST.** On a recent bushwalk on the Poverty Track and in The Monk region the native orchids and other plants identified were -

Pink Fingers ( <i>Caladenia pusilla</i> ) f	Primrose Goodenia ( <i>Goodenia blackiana</i> ) f
Purplish Beard-orchid ( <i>Calochilus robertsonii</i> )	Gold-dust Wattle ( <i>Acacia acinacea</i> ) f
Leopard Orchid ( <i>Diuris pardinia</i> ) f	Golden Wattle ( <i>A. pycnantha</i> ) f
Waxlips ( <i>Glossodia major</i> ) f	Rough Wattle ( <i>A. aspera</i> ) f
Bl-anther Flax-lily ( <i>Dianella revoluta</i> ) f	Spreading Wattle ( <i>A. genistifolia</i> ) f
Early Nancy ( <i>Wurmbea dioica</i> ) f	Red Box ( <i>Eucalyptus polyanthemos</i> )
Mat Rush ( <i>Lomandra sp</i> )	Sweet Bursaria (Christmas Bush in Tas) ( <i>Bursaria spinosa</i> )
Coffee Bush ( <i>Cassinia aculeata</i> )	Bushy Needlewood ( <i>Hakea sp</i> )
Billy Buttons ( <i>Craspedia sp</i> ) f	Cherry Ballart ( <i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i> )
Yam Daisy ( <i>Microseris sp</i> )	Dusty Miller ( <i>Spyridium parvifolium</i> ) f
Sundew ( <i>Errienellum</i> ) ( <i>Drosera peltata</i> <i>ssp auriculata</i> ) f	Fairy Waxflower ( <i>Eriostemon verrucosus</i> ) f
Daphne Heath ( <i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i> )	White marianth ( <i>Rhytidosperma procumbens</i> )
Urn Heath ( <i>Melichrus urceolatus</i> )	Rice flower ( <i>Pimelea sp</i> ) f
Narrow-lf Bitter-pea ( <i>Dav. leptophylla</i> ) f	Grass Trigger-plant <i>Stylidium graminifolium</i> )
Coarse Dodder-laurel (Snottygobble?) ( <i>Cassytha melantha</i> )	Pink Bells ( <i>Tetratheca ciliata</i> ) f (TA)

**50 GLOSSY IBIS** were seen beside the Boort-Durham Ox Road on Oct 1st. (EP)

**SHOVELLERS AT BELLS SWAMP.** Four were seen on 24/9 (EP), and six, on 9/10 the CFNC excursion.

**BLUE-WINGED PARROT** was seen at Trentham. (SB)

**CRIMSON ROSELLA NESTING IN CHIMNEY** in Castle-maine. Some problem from falling soot. (MO)

**RAINBOW BIRDS.** 10 were seen at the North British Mine on Oct 1st. (KT)

**LARGE HARE** was seen, behind the Technical College. (GE)

**STONE CURLEWS.** A pair were seen near Mt Tarrengower. (KT)

**HOPPING ANIMAL** was seen in Vanston Street. Two were seen. Smaller than a wallaby, with rat-like tails, and hopping. Can a reader identify them?

**SUTTON GRANGE BIRDS.** Rainbow Birds are now present, and the first Yellow Robin for the season. Chestnut Teal has been seen along the roadway. (MH)

**AMBIDEXTROUS ROSELLAS.** Studies over many months show that they use both feet equally for feeding. (TA)

**STRIATED PARDALOTE** has been nesting in the toolshed, in a cupboard. (LC)

**YOUNG MAGPIE** was seen on the ground. It was almost devoid of tail feathers. Parents had difficulty in getting it off the ground to safety, from a watching cat. (MW)

**CORELLAS AT TRENTHAM.** In a flock of 150 birds, about a third were Long-billed Corellas. The birds were feeding on chocolate-coloured soil, and the corellas were easily distinguished by their soiled plumage, contrasting with the white colour of the cockatoos. (SB)

**WASPS PARASITISE CITRUS BUTTERFLY.** "After discovering the pupa of a Dinky Swallowtail (Citrus Butterfly) on my potted cumquat tree, and keeping watch on it for some weeks, it was disappointing to find recently that it was covered with very small insects resembling wasps. Closer inspection revealed a tiny neat hole in the side of the pupa from which about a dozen had emerged - about 4 mm in size. A day later, one or two still seemed to be appearing from the pupa - the others had scattered earlier, and I was surprised that so many could fit into such a small area." (SP)

**SALMON-PINK SHOWY PARROT-PEA** (*Dillwynia sericea*) was seen in Kalimna, east of the high school. The usual colour is "egg and bacon". (FB)



**HAWKS AT HARCOURT NORTH.** A pair of Peregrines, a pair of Whistling Eagles and a single Swamp Harrier were seen aloft, working the same area, along the North Harcourt-Sedgwick Rd. (CM)

**PLATYPUS** seen in the Loddon River at Glenluce, on 18th October. (PM & EP)

**BOOBOOK** was heard calling from the Kalimna bushland, in the direction of the golf course at 11.15 pm on Oct 5th. (SP)

## **BIRDS AT 61 HUNTER STREET IN OCTOBER**

Birds seen at the rear of 61 Hunter Street (which adjoins Kalimna Bush)

Maned Duck (one on chimney)	Rufous Whistler (pair)	Silvereyes
Sulphur-crested Cockatoos	Red Wattlebirds	Mistletoe Birds
Eastern Rosella (one)	Yellow-faced Honeyeaters (pr)	Goldfinches
Crimson Rosellas	New Holland Honeyeaters (pr)	Magpies
Common Bronzewing	Eastern Spinebills	Ravens
Blackbirds (pair)	Spotted Pardalotes	

S Parnaby.

## **POMAX AT FRYERSTOWN**

*Pomax (Pomax umbellata)*, found growing at Fryerstown, near the Crocodile Reservoir, is an exciting addition to the district's plant list. The plant was found by Ian Higgins.

The name *Pomax* refers to the lid covering the compound fruit. The flowers are in sprays, rather like those of carrots and celery (and hence the term *umbellata*). The leaves are in opposite pairs. Height is about 10 cm.

*Pomax* occurs in most of the Australian States. It is a member of the *rubiacae* family - the same family as the woodruffs and coffee. It is a variable plant, and at times has been divided into several species. At present it is regarded as a single species.

J.T. Hawkeswood, in "Australian Plants", Mar 1977, wrote "... it is a plant which I think is probably worthy of cultivation as an interesting addition to a bush garden. Although a common plant, in many situations, it is not very well known and hence I would like to introduce this plant to the various readers who may be interested in knowing something about its biology." E.P.



## **C.F.N.C. MAMMAL AND REPTILE LIST**

The Club has for some years had a bird list and an plant list. At the last business meeting it was decided to make a mammal list also. We want, for the list, sightings of all wild mammals, whether native, like echidnas,

possums or wallabies, and introduced animals, such as foxes, rabbits and hares. If you have any observations, either current or historical, please tell Ern Perkins. If possible, give also the date and location, and any other interesting information.

We should also keep a reptile list. Again, any information would be welcomed.

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## **CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM**

Excursions leave promptly at the times indicated.

**Fri 12 Nov. ROB WATKINS "NATURAL HISTORY IN THE EYES OF A PHOTOGRAPHER"**  
High School at 8.00 pm.

**Sat 13 Nov. TERRICK TERRICK** via Eaglehawk and Mitiamo. Leave 27 Doveton St at 9.30 am. All day excursion. Take lunch.

**Thurs 18 Nov. U3A/CFNC BIRDWATCHING.** 9.30 am at Continuing Education car park, Templeton St. Leaders B Maund and M Oliver.

**Thurs 25 Nov. BUSINESS MEETING.** 7.30 pm at 38 Campbell St.

**Fri 10 Dec. MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT.** High School at 8.00 pm. Members are asked to provide a short segment for the evening's program, where possible. Please bring supper.

**Sat 11 Dec. TRENTHAM.** Meet SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30 pm, or next to the Kyneton Botanic Gardens (Mollison St) at 2.00 pm. Leader is Kath Meehan. Depending on weather, we may take our tea - to be decided at the meeting.

**Thurs 28 Jan. BUSINESS MEETING.** 7.30 at 38 Campbell St.

**Frid 11 Feb. TASMANIA.** George Broadway. Castlemaine Secondary College (the former high school) at 8.00 pm. This is the annual meeting.

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**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.

**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.

**Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club inc. P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450.**