

Castlemaine Naturalist

March 1994

#198 Vol.18.1



Book Review

Margaret Hunter 10/2/94

"Tiny Game Hunting" Environmentally Healthy Ways to Trap and Rid Pests from Your House and Garden.

By Hillary Dole and Adrian M Wenner. Adapted By John Dengate.
1993 Bantam Paperback 312 pages I paid \$16.95

This book joins a growing library of publications offering advice on methods of living amicably beside other beasties of the earth, or how to knock down populations of what we find the most irritating – without using the most toxic of modern chemical warfare. Tiny Game Hunting is fun to read as well as informative. This seems to have resulted from the inclusion of historical asides and anecdotes which are cleverly woven around facts about pest life cycles, structure and habits, etc. – Did you know that the Egyptians used to smear a slave with milk of asses and make him stand in the room as a human flea trap?

The black line "old style" drawings are decorative and amusing but sometimes explanatory. I have found the lack of high tech/colour illustrations is not a problem as the text is simple and written descriptions adequate.

A wide range of pests is covered – in the house, pantry, garden and beyond. There are not only the "tiny" mites but range in size to dogs, cats, etc. Throughout are suggestions for traps and barriers, preventatives, deterrents, recipes and upmtteen coping strategies. I really liked the final advise concerning possums which involves the use of brandy and black forest cake when all else fails(you forget the possum!)

A very useful feature is information on the natural predators of our pests and of creatures which are either harmless or suffer from an undeserved reputation (although I am still to be absolutely convinced about the "innocent" feeding habits of my variety of slaters). (Me too!!! Ed.)

John Dengate, known from his radio and T.V. work had done an excellent job in adapting the original American text. The result is even and peculiarly local life forms are well integrated into those found over a wider range. Selected References, and the small Stockist and Society Lists are Australian. Layout of the book makes it easy to access for recreational reading and information seeking. The index is comprehensive, including subjects, scientific and common names under one alphabetical list.

I am sure that it's impossible to find any reference which will answer all questions, and indeed I did find myself and Dengate stumped on information about "Leopard?" Slugs*. It is a better buy than most. I have found it has stimulated me to observe the tiny game about me more carefully and critically. I've never failed to be beguiled into happily reading on into other sections when I've tried to use it as a straight reference for problem solving.

* While I was up at Perisher I was admiring one of the big ginger and brown carnivorous (so I've been told) slugs when someone came up to me and asked me what I'd found. His exclamation when he saw it was "Oh, a Leopard Slug", so perhaps that is the problem solved? Ed.

Sandon in January

Birds on the Property

Australasian grebe
Pacific Heron (24/1)
White-faced Heron (pr)
Sacred Ibis(24/1)
Maned Duck
Little Eagle
Brown Falcon (Pr)
Masked Lapwings
Galahs
Sulphur-crested Cockatoos
Eastern Rosellas
Red-rumped Parrots
Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo
Shining Bronze Cuckoo
Owlet-Nightjar
Kookaburras
Welcome Swallows
Richards Pipit
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes
Yellow Robins (4 together)
Crested Shriketits (3 together)
Rufous Whistler (pr)
Grey Shrike-thrush (pr)
Willie Wagtail (pr)

Speckled Warbler (pr)
Weebills
Yellow-rumped Thornbills
Southern White-faces
Red Wattle-birds
Yellow-faced Honeyeaters
Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters
Mistletoebird
Spotted Pardelotes
Striated Pardelotes
Red-browed ffiretails
Diamond Firetails(pr + 2 imm.)
White-winged choughs
Magpies
Grey Currawong
Australian Ravens
At the bird bath
Crimson Rosellas
Scarlet Robin (imm.)
Grey Fantail (+ 1 imm.)
Wrens
Thornbills - Brown, buff-rumped,
 Striated
White-throated Tree-creeper
Brown-headed Honeyeater

A pair of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters has just raised two young in our quince tree. The nest is a delicate lacy cup of grass hanging between twigs and seems quite insubstantial, although I read it is reinforced with cobwebs. The pair's first attempt in January in the stone pine was blown down in a storm and the nestlings were lost.

Animals

Bats, Brushtailed Possums, Echidna, Yellow-footed Antechinus.

The Antechinus ran 15' up the trunk of a Red Stringybark and down the other side until it was about 2' from the ground and close enough to jump the 12" across to the adjoining trunk which it explored in the same way.

Susannah Starr

Precious Moments

Can you imagine? For twenty minutes, about 5.30 one afternoon, standing on your own front lawn surrounded by Silvereyes, Red-browed Firetails, including juveniles, New Holland Honeyeaters and Yellow-rumped Thornbills, all making such a twittering, all dashing here and there in the shrubs and on the lawn, and all ignoring your presence. That lovely experience was Maggie Oliver's just this month (Feb.). Why they were there in such numbers or what they were finding is a mystery.

January/February Bird List for 61 Hunter Street

New Holland Honeyeaters with juveniles, Eastern Spinebills with juveniles and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, all feeding on Banksia saxicola (a Grampians species). Others were -

Rufous Whistlers	Spotted Pardelotes
Kookaburras	Superb Blue Wrens
Australian Ravens	Sparrows
Magpies	Red Wattlebird
Grey Currawong	Yellow-rumped Thornbills
Sulphur-crested Cockatoos	Weebills
Crimson Rosellas	Goldfinches
Silvereyes	

S.P.

Monday 14th March

"Using Local Plants Locally"

Speaker is Jim Robinson of Greening Australia Victoria

at

the Newstead Mechanics Institute Hall

at 7.30 pm.

More Observations

Tall Lobelia in Area 2 N1 (Mia Mia Road)

Crested Pigeon in K area (at church)

White Box in Area 2 N1

Ottelia ovalifolia (Swamp Lily) in Area 1 N1 and N10

S.S.

ANOTHER ALPINE INTERLUDE

The Victorian Nature Photography Group and Bendigo Field Nats again shared a Camp in the Kosciusko National Park in January, this time at the Kahane Lodge in Perisher Valley over three weeks, with a different group each week. The weather varied from snow and rain on the first couple of days to quite hot weather during the last week, but I don't know of anyone who didn't enjoy the Camp thoroughly.

I went up on the last week, leaving Castlemaine on the 21st of January and picking Kath Thompson up at Heathcote on the way. We'd never met before, but 'hit it off' straight away, so we each had a good companion for the whole of the time. We stayed overnight at Corryong and continued next morning. One stop was Scammell's Lookout where I happily recognised peaks that I had been on or near on the last Camp.

All went well 'til Tom Groggin where we stopped for a late morning tea, but then the fun started! First we found ourselves following a couple of horse floats, and, not being very experienced in mountain driving, I followed them at a low speed, enjoying the scenery. Finally one stopped and let the horses out because the load was too much, and I finally passed that one and the next one, eying my temperature gauge rather warily - but diesels aren't supposed to boil, are they? especially when they have Coolant in the radiator? But it did! and we sat beside the road while others passed us from time to time for an hour. The engine had cooled quite a bit but we decided to have lunch there, and then went on up as far as Mt Pilot Lookout, and again it was getting too hot. This time I hailed a ute and the driver assured me I could put water in with the coolant and we used up our small supply of water, including the last in the flask and what I could get out of the ice block. To cut a long, sad story short, we got to the garage at the T intersection near Jindabyne and got the radiator checked and filled - it took 4 litres!

This bad start promised a really good week, and it was. Like a number of others we chose the Waterfall Walk at Sawpit Creek the first day, and saw hundreds of the beautiful Royal Bluebells, several orchids, including a greenhood and a sun-orchid which had people puzzling for days. The final (?) verdict on the greenhood was that it was *P. concinna*, but I don't think any definite conclusion was reached on the sun-orchid. There were also numerous daisies, including several everlastings, peas, (a few which were not known to me looked as if they might belong to the glycine family), Alpine Oxylobium, several buttercups, willow herb, lots of Pale Vanilla Lilies, baeckea and two ti-tree species, and a few Common Bird Orchids. There were quite a few birds, though not the number of species we're used to at home - Rufous Whistlers, Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Yellow Robins, White-eared Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebirds, White-throated Tree-creeper, Kookaburra, Grey Shrike-thrush and a Satin Flycatcher.

On the Monday we drove up to Charlottes Pass and first walked along the Snow-gum boardwalk, and then to Mt Stillwell. We walked the first part through yellow Kunzea, and then out onto snowgrass and Euphrasias. Up under Stilwell itself we found Alpine Stackhousia, and Carpet Heath with both flowers and berries. When we finally gained the summit by our round-about route I decided that I hadn't a hope of doing the Lakes Walk later in

V.F.N.C.A. Field Studies Skills Workshop Camp

The organisers of the Workshop at Anglesea on 7 - 16 Oct 1994 need bookings to be made now. Facilities are excellent, and study aids and field study equipment will be available.

Subject leaders are - Neil Archbold - Landform

Geoff Carr - Plants

Pauline Reilly - Birds

Barbara Wilson- Mammals

All are specialists and have direct experience in the Anglesea area.

John Landy is the guest speaker on Saturday October 8.

The cost of the full session is \$250 - 300, depending on numbers, but if you are not able to attend the full time it is possible to stay for a day or several days.

You are also asked to indicate the subject you wish to pursue (perhaps a different one from your usual field?)

They must have your booking plus your deposit of \$100 by March 31st, but would prefer it by the Morwell Camp if you are attending, so they will know if the Workshop is viable or not. If there are not sufficient numbers the camp will have to be cancelled.

Organisers are Dave King (052-593023)

Dick Southcombe (052-433919)

Ern Perkins has Booking Forms and further information.

the week, much less going any further that day! But, after a rest, and a talk to some regulars who were up there, we decided to go on to the ruins of the old restaurant. We had lunch on the way, sitting on the bank of the creek and watching the Galaxias darting around in the clear water. Then we were strengthened for the last bit. I think we might have been a bit far down the slope as we seemed to be walking through and over alternate shrubs and bogs, but we finally reached the ruins safely to find the people who had directed us there already. We followed them part of the way towards the saddle above Charlottes Pass Village, but lost their tracks and again wound up in bogs, but we finally crossed the creek again and met them at the second "hut" where they were waiting for us, and they accompanied us back, down a very steep slope through some beautiful snow gums to just near the village, where they headed up to the carpark via the ski slope, and we went down into the village, where we were very glad of the offer of a lift up to the car by a fellow whom we had met a couple of times on the walk. We didn't mind in the slightest that it was in his truck!

Day three was spent in Jindabyne and walking around Rainbow Lake, where we saw the beautiful Yellow Marshwort, and I at last managed to stand in a bog over my boot-top!

Australia Day, and we had decided that this was to be the Big Day - the Lakes Walk, or the Main Ridge Walk if you prefer. With all our kit and food on board we set off from Charlottes Pass at 7.45 am. Halfway down the paved track to the Snowy Kath let out a warning yell, but our only snake of the week was a harmless white lipped snake, which was quite lively for that time of day. On the way up the next slope we saw the one and only gentian of the day. I had expected to see them up near Lake Albina again, but there was not a one. Time and again I was intrigued by the delicate white, and on one occasion, pink, flowers of the Purslane growing in the most difficult ground in the path, or in damp spots on the side of cuttings.

When we reached the saddle near the Sentinel we were hit by quite a cool wind that almost blew us off our feet, but it was a lovely feeling after our long walk up from the bottom at the stream before the climb up to Blue Lake. It had been a lovely walk, with lots of daisies, Billy Buttons and Euphrasia to delight us. We had our lunch on the nice flat bench of rock above Lake Albina, and as we ate we watched a couple of intrepid walkers who were exploring far below around the lake, and a pair of Nankeen Kestrels hunting for their lunch (of Pippit?) above the valley - and below us much of the time. Eventually, after taking our time up that last pull before Kosciusko (no, we didn't attempt to climb up to the snow patches, but Kath did go down to the last one before the main track) we turned right to go up to the summit of Kosciusko. We didn't even join all the mountaineers (including a Scout Troop) at the cairn at first. We sat down and had a drink and a rest, even a snooze in one case, then we tackled the important bit - getting someone to take a photo of us both up there! This time I really did get a view from our highest mountain, and it wasn't a disappointment - last time my view was only of clouds and rocks. It was a very different day. On the way back we stopped at the Snowy for another drink and a paddle before continuing down to the Car Park, which we reached at 5.45, exactly 10 hours after we left.

On Thursday we decided to take a quieter day and so caught the Ski Tube to Bullocks Flat, where we ruined our good resolution by walking down to Bullocks Hut and then deciding that we would continue on to the Diggings. We were going to have lunch somewhere along the way, but in the end wound up hurrying back from the camping area to catch the 1 o'clock train. It must have done wonders for our waistlines! We saw lots of flowers and quite a number of birds on the walk, but the whole area is so different from higher up that we thoroughly enjoyed the experience, especially sighting lots of little Jackie Lizards, one of which had a distinctly reddish tinge.

We had our lunch up under a snow gum near the Blue Cow terminus, and then headed off for a walk, finding Sky Lilies around some dried pools not far off the track. We walked on a bit further until we were almost to one of the ski tows. The snow gums on the mountain opposite were quite a sight.

The following day was a bit easier. We walked up to Porcupine Rocks and Kath achieved an ambition - she found fruit on the Pineapple Grass. What a magnificent view there is from Porcupine Rocks. I tried to photograph a large spotted skink up there but she got camera shy just as I went to press the button. We returned to the Lodge via Wheatley Pass and got back just before it started to rain.

The evening programs were most enjoyable, too. At about 8.30 when most meals were over and dishes done we settled down in the dining room, exchanged reports of the days sightings, and enjoyed recitations by Nancy Stone of Bendigo most evenings, followed by a slide program. On one evening one of the rangers, Kate Beurle, showed us slides of her trip through some of the East African National Parks in 1989 after she had been involved in Operation Rally in Zimbabwe. Another evening there was a program of orchid slides, another program was of a trip up the Rift Valley in East Africa, another a tour of some of the Western states of U.S.A. including the Grand Canyon and Monument Valley. Another evening took us to the South-west of Western Australia. Rob Watkins screened his slide program "Morning, Noon and Night" for us. One evening a number of different slides from several members were screened. Some of these were magnificent, and one of a close-up of a Bulldog ant drew many comments, with requests after to be shown how it was done.

Several of the members submitted photo albums of their work for us to browse through and on the last evening Eric Perkins showed some of the colour prints that he has developed himself.

Viv Ball did a magician's act and showed us the photographers' coat that he had bought himself on a trip to the Flinders Ranges. It was amazing how many gadgets he managed to have hidden away, all ready for use, in those many pockets.

On the last evening Rob and Cynthia Watkins, who had worked so hard for so long, especially over the three weeks of the Camp (though they assured us that they had a great time, too) to make it a success, showed some of the work that they have been doing. As usual there were plenty of oohs and aahs. They were both presented with a collection of goodies - including the book on Alpine Flora that someone overheard them saying they wished they had - as a resounding "thank you" for all that they had done.

I wish I could say we had an uneventful trip home, but we went back through Cabramurra, Australia's highest town, and managed to bring the car to the boil (only briefly this time) on the steepest grade in Australia (so we were told). Again we stayed at Corryong before the long hot drive home the next day. Would I do it again? When is the next one? We've had the car fixed, and I know the tricks of Alpine driving now.

Rita Mills

OBSERVATIONS

BROWN-HEADED HONEYEATER was seen at the bird bath, for the first time at McKenzie's Hill. (IP)

BLACK COCKATOOS. A flock was seen circling Kyneton (KM). A pair were also seen at Wombat Hill, Daylesford (SO). Presumably Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos.

NEEDLETAILS, in a flock of about 20, was seen on a storm front at Moyston on 6th February (RM)

PELICANS were seen flying at Chewton, heading in the direction of Lake Eppalock. (TP)

SWAMP ISOTOMES are still in flower near the dam at Faraday. Usually they dry off in summer, but wet weather has kept them growing. (MH)

INDIAN MYNAHS. A pair were seen during a December walk through Castlemaine. (SB)

AUSTRALIAN HOBBIES. The nest in Camp Reserve has produced young, which are now flying. There have been many sightings. (SB & others)

MUSK LORIKEETS have discovered apples, and are feeding on them in the town, and in the Harcourt orchards. (GB & others).

BANDICOOT? was seen in the car headlights at Newstead.

NANKEEN NIGHT HERON was disturbed from rushes at German Gully (Campbell's Creek-Irishtown), when it flew to a tree. (FD)

HYACINTH ORCHARDS have been abundant in the Wombat Forest beyond Daylesford. (FD).

This is really for those who get their Newsletter early -

There is a land for Wildlife Field Day on Wed March 9, in the Huntly Hall at Huntly, starting at 2.30. The subject is bats, and mist nets will be in place so that people will be able to see the bats at close quarters. The cost, \$6 for Adults and \$2 for children includes an evening meal.

For Information and registration phone Peter Morison on 44 6666.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

*Excursions leave promptly at the times stated.

Fri March 11 **Remnant Bushland and its Protection.** Speaker Bill Middleton. At Junior Campus C.S.C., Lawson Pde at 8 pm.

Sat March 12 **Birds of Mt Alexander.** Visit to private property and walk or drive down to the channel. Leave S.E.C. at 1.30pm. Leader Nigel Harland.

Mon March 14 **Using Local Plants Locally** Information inside, p3.

Wed March 30 **Bats at Lake Weroona** with Bendigo F.N.C. Mammal Group at the Pincic Shelter in nearest the railway line. Meet Bendigo Field Nats at dusk, after a barbecue tea at the shelter.

Fri April 8 **Islands and Seabirds.** Speaker is Mike Carter. 8pm at Junior Campus C.S.C., Lawson Pde.

Sat April 9 **Environmental Survey of some Local Public Reserves.**
Leader, Chris Morris.

April 11-15 **B.O.C. camp at Maldon.** Maggie Oliver would like to see some club members at the camp on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for all day outings. Contact Maggie for details and each day's plans.

Sat May 14 **Mt Cameron to Mt Greenock.** Part of the Major Mitchell Trail. Birds and exploring. Leader, Rita Mills. Leave S.E.C. at 1.30pm.

Fri June 10 **Western Australia.** Winston Huggins.

Fri July 8 **Four Seasons in Hampshire.**

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/Amhurst area with Maryborough FNC

U3A/CFNC BIRDWATCHING

Thursday March 18 Meet Continuing Ed. Car Park, Templeton St. at 9.30 am. Leader, G Broadway.

Thursday April 21 Meet Continuing Ed. Car Park, 9.30am..

Committee: B. Maund (Pres.), M. Hunter (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, B. Envall 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

***Note that Subs are now due. Are yours paid up?**

Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club inc.,

P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine. 3450.