

# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

November 1995  
#217 Vol 19.10



Mistletoe Bird nest.

## OBSERVATIONS

**Spread of noxious weeds in Muckleford area.** Young plants of St John's Wort were seen in the "quince tree area" of Muckleford Forest. Two-leaf Cape Tulip is in flower around the middle of Butcher's Rd on the west side; in a significant patch of roadside vegetation just outside the forest east of the lily farm big dam; and on the south side of the Pyrenees Hwy, 300 m E of Walmer Rd - another attractive stretch of roadside. (SS)

**Stressed Plants in Muckleford Forest.** Along Nevill's track on 29/9/95 many dead or stressed understory plants were seen. Few flowers of note were seen, apart from Waxlip Orchids and a large group of Rabbit's Ears (*Thelymitra antennifera*). (SS)

**Crested Bell Bird and White-browed Babbler** crossed the road in front of the car. (SS)

**Choughs nesting at Sandon.** White-winged Choughs added another story to the nest last used 2 years ago. Is this usual? (SS)

**Orchids in flower at Sandon** on 10/10/95 were

Blunt Greenhood (*Pterostylis curta*)

Maroonhood (*P. pedunculata*, a new record for the block) -

Waxlip (*Glossodia major*)

Musky Caladenia (*Caladenia gracilis*),

Hooded Caladenia (*C. cucullata*, hundreds)

Purple Beard-orchid (*Calochilus robertsonii*),

Scented Sun-orchid (*Thelymitra nuda*)

Slender Sun-orchid (*T. pauciflora*)

Spotted Sun Orchid (*T. ixioides*)

Salmon Sun-Orchid (*T. rubra*)

Common Onion Orchid (*Microtis unifolia*)

**Hundreds of large caterpillars** were crawling on a grassy hill, at Sandon. Grass area is a mixture of native and introduced grasses. Some caterpillars were eating Spear Grass leaves. (SS, 13/10)

**Brown and White Throated Treecreepers** were having an altercation. (SS, 19/9, Sandon)

**Chestnut Breasted Shelduck.** 83 birds were seen feeding in a paddock at the corner of Strathlea Rd and Pyrenees Hwy, on 31/10/95. (EP)

**Harcourt Dawn Chorus.** A noisy visitor has been at work by 5 am each morning; the culprit has been identified as a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater. (BE)

**Clamorous Reed Warbler** has been heard and seen near the Harcourt swimming pool. (BE)

**White-necked Herons.** 24 birds were seen at Bell's Swamp recently. (MO)

**Mistletoe Bird** is nesting in a street tree in the Maldon Township. (MO)

**Nankeen Night Heron** has been at a pond in Pound Lane, Guildford. (BP)

## BIRDS AT 61 HUNTER STREET DURING OCTOBER

The nest box in the pepper tree is occupied again this year, and being visited by both Eastern and Crimson Rosellas on occasion, so we are uncertain of the identity of the five youngsters which have hatched, and will have to wait until their father appears.

A pair of Rufous Whistlers have been serenading each other around the garden, and the

New Holland and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters have been battling the Red Wattlebirds for a share of the nectar from the blossom on the Blue Mallet eucalypt.

At 1.30 am recently a Southern Boobook called from the garden at "Buda", and a Common Bronzewing called from the same area in early morning and late afternoons

There are a few Goldfinches around the garden, but other small birds seem scarce at present.

Before the recent stormy weather a flock of swifts appeared, circling and feeding around our area, and a White-faced Heron flew by.

The Oriole is still calling from Kalimna Bush behind our place.

S. Parnaby.

## SANDON BIRD LIST FOR SEPTEMBER 1995

Australian Wood Duck	Welcome Swallow	Buff-rumped Thornbill
Pacific Black Duck	Jacky Winter	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
White-faced Heron (pr)	Scarlet Robin	Yellow Thornbill
Little Eagle	Eastern Yellow Robin	Striated Thornbill
Masked Lapwing	Rufous Whistler	Weebill
Galah	Grey Shrike-thrush	Red Wattlebird
Long-billed Corella	Blue Wren	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Restless Flycatcher	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Crimson Rosella	Grey Fantail	Fuscous Honeyeater
Eastern Rosella (nest in box)	Willie Wagtail	White-naped Honeyeater
Red-rumped Parrot	Richard's Pipit	Spotted Pardalote
Pallid Cuckoo (24/9)	Common Blackbird	Striated Pardalote
Shining Bronze Cuckoo (19/9)	White-throated Treecreeper	Magpie Lark
Aust Owllet Nightjar (h)	Brown Treecreeper	White-winged Chough
Kookaburra	Speckled Warbler	Magpie
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Brown Thornbill	Grey Currawong

S. Starr

## QUESTION CORNER

**Mistletoe Bird nest.** The nest (see illustration p 1) was found in a car port at Taradale, after a strong wind. It may have come from nearby pines or a large gum. A greyish feather with yellow tips was in the nest.

The nest appears to be that of a Mistletoe Bird. These birds build beautiful woven nests, which are often ornamented with lichen, as is the case with this nest. Other decorations such as flowers and beetles can also be used. The nest is suspended from a sloping twig at any height up to 10 metres or more. The feather possibly was used in the construction of the nest.

The Club had an earlier record of a Mistletoe Bird nest being blown off its support; the finder made a macrame net for the nest, and hung it back. The Mistletoe Bird successfully raised the young.

**Sheep's Burr.** Is the specimen supplied *Acaena ovina*?

Four members of the *acaena* genus grow locally. All four are native. Bidgee Widgee has spherical flowers, and when ripe, produces burrs that stick to socks and trousers. The other three members have elongated flowers. *Acaena agniphila* and *A. ovina* are densely hairy on the backs of the leaves, and *A. echinata* is hairy along the main vein.

The specimen is hairy on the veins only, and so is *A. echinata*. It is common in the district.

# ORCHID UPDATE

The classification of the orchid family is subject to constant revision, and many new species have been described in recent years. This article gives some of the changes that are now necessary to our orchid list.

The information has been obtained from the newly published *The Orchids of Victoria*, Gary Backhouse and Jeffrey Jeans, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne. This is a beautiful book, and a *must buy* if you are interested in accurately identifying the local orchids. A page is given to each orchid species, including a colour photograph and a distribution map.

The changes are to be welcomed, and have resolved some of the difficulties in identifying our local orchids. Observation over the next few years will be needed to determine the distribution of the newly described species.

## Mosquito Orchids

**Gnat Orchid.** This species becomes The Small Mosquito Orchid, *Acianthus pusillus*. It was formerly *Acianthus exsertus*, which is confined to Gippsland.

## Pink Fingers

There are three species in the district; one is early-flowering, the other late-flowering, and the third is small-flowered.

**Pink Fingers** (*Caladenia carnea*). It has one or more flowers/plant, and the flowers are white to bright pink. The labellum side-lobes do not have forward-pointing extensions and the outside of the flowers are pink to greenish. It flowers late in spring (e.g. October). There are two varieties

*var carnea.* The common variety. The labellum is white or pink with darker red bars. This is the common variety.

*var ornata.* The labellum is reddish with darker bars. The lateral sepals are held close together, and often fused at the base. It is apparently not common, but is present in the Metcalfe Flora Reserve.

**Dusky Caladenia** *Caladenia fuscata*. The flowers are white to pink. It has one flower/plant. The labellum side-lobes have a prominent forward-pointing extensions which embrace the column. The outside of the flower has dark brown glandular hairs. It is early flowering.

It is probably widespread in the district. Often it is in flower at the same time as the Blue Caladenia.

**Tiny Caladenia** *Caladenia pusilla*. It is much smaller than the other Pink Fingers, with flower segments less than 7 mm. The flowers are usually multi-coloured e.g. pale centre with deeper pink tips. It has been described as "candy coloured". The flower segments are broad and spreading.

It is probably widely spread, but is seldom seen. It has been found in the Muckleford Forest, at The Monk and in the Metcalfe Flora reserve.

## Greencomb Spider Orchids

At least two species are present; they were formerly grouped under *Caladenia dilatata*. The two species are readily distinguished, once the two species have been seen.

**Brown-clubbed Spider Orchid** (*Caladenia phaeoclavia*). This species is the smaller of the two. The height is usually under 40 cm, and the sepals are usually less than 40 cm long. The sepals have brown "clubs" on the ends. The "teeth" of the comb are small and compact.

It is found on the Monk, in the Chewton Bushland, in Wattle Flat Forest, and at Glenluce.

**Mantis Orchid** (*Caladenia tentaculata*). It is usually taller than 40 cm, and the petals are longer than 4 cm. The labellum is mobile, and has very large teeth. The sepals, but not the petals, are tipped with long clubs. It is abundant in the southern Chewton bushland.

## Hyacinth Orchids

**Rosy Hyacinth Orchid** (*Dipodium roseum*). It is distinguished by pink, red-spotted flowers. The flower-tips are strongly recurved (i.e. bent back).

The Purple Hyacinth Orchid (*Dipodium punctatum*) could also occur in our district. It has white to pink flowers with dark pink splotches, and the flower tips are not or only slightly recurved.

## Golden Moths

Two species occur in the district

**Golden Cowslips** (*Diuris behrii*). It is larger than Golden Moths. The plant is often more than 30 cm tall, and the flower is usually at least 2.5 cm across. It flowers late e.g. mid-October.

It grows in several localities near Metcalfe.

**Golden Moths** (*Diuris lanceolata*). It flowers in September, and the flowers are usually less than 25 mm across. It is usually well under 30 cm tall. This is the more common species in our district.

## Leopard Orchid

**Leopard Orchid** (*Diuris pardina*). This species was formerly known as *D. maculata*. It is one of our commonest orchids.

## Midge Orchids

These tiny autumn-flowering orchids are very hard to find, but are moderately common. There are several species. A key to the local species is

1. Labellum margins ciliate (with a fringe of hairs)
  2. Flower prominently nodding; lateral sepals horizontal to deflexed ..... *G. archeri*
  - 2: Flowers extending outwards to slightly nodding; lateral sepals erect to obliquely erect ..... *G. ciliatum*
- 1: Labellum margins entire to minutely crenulate
  3. Labellum lanceolate with a long acuminate tip ..... *G. despectans*
  - 3: Labellum oblong to ovate, never tapering to a long ovate tip ..... *G. sp affin rufum*

**Variable Midge-orchid** (*Genoplesium archeri*). It is few (5-12) flowered. The flowers are greenish with reddish markings. The labellum is dark and fringed.

**Fringed Midge Orchid** (*Genoplesium ciliatum*). It is few (3-10) flowered; the flowers are semi-erect, and yellowish-green. The labellum is reddish and fringed.

**Sharp Midge-orchid** (*Genoplesium despectans*). It is a very thin, erect, many (5-40) flowered orchid. The flowers are arranged in a dense spike.

**Dark Midge Orchid** (*Genoplesium* sp aff *rufum*). The flowers are a dark reddish-brown with yellowish-green markings on the basal parts. The margin of the labellum widens towards the tip, and then abruptly contracts to a the apex.

The midge orchid illustrated in the *Common Orchids of the Castlemaine District* appears to be *G. despectans*.

## Onion Orchids

There are three species in the district.

**Slender Onion Orchid** (*Microtis parvifolia*). The labellum is heart-shaped to triangular with minutely wavy margins. There are two dark green calli at the base. The stem is slender and green.

It is common in the district.

**Common Onion Orchid.** *Microtis unifolia*. The plant is greenish; the labellum is not notched or minutely notched. If minutely notched, it does not have a spur in the notch. The dorsal sepal has a blunt apex.

Many specimens previously thought to be this species are now included in Notched Onion Orchid.

**Notched Onion Orchid** *Microtis arenaria*. Is often yellowish-green in colour. The labellum is notched, this a small spur in the notch. The dorsal sepal ends in an upturned point.

It appears to be widespread in the district. For example, it grows on The Monk. The illustration in the Club's orchid booklet is this species. Specimens have been recorded on The Monk.

## Leek Orchids

The Scented Leek Orchid and the Sweet Leek orchid are considered to be the same species, *Prasophyllum odoratum*.

## Tall Greenhoods

Two species occur in the district. The relative abundance of each needs to be determined.

**Emerald-tip Greenhood** (*Pterostylis smaragdina*). Differs from the tall Greenhood by its stockier habit, and larger, more upright, distinctly striped flowers. The seed capsules are more prominently ribbed, Although it can grow with Tall Greenhood, it prefers dryer areas, and flowers earlier.

**Tall Greenhood** (*P. longifolia*). It is probably the more common species.

## Sun Orchids

There are four plain-blue sun orchids in the district. The Great Sun Orchid is very uncommon I have seen only one plant in the district, and that many years ago.

**Great Sun Orchid** (*Thelymitra aristata*). It is a very handsome orchid, growing up to a metre in height, and with numerous large blue flowers. It is very seldom seen in the Castlemaine district.

**Blue-star Sun Orchid** (*Thelymitra holmesii*). Can be recognised from its smallish, readily opening deep-blue flowers with a deeply cleft column mid-lobe. It grows in swampy areas. Castlemaine and Mandurang districts.

Observation is needed to ascertain the abundance of this species.

**Scented Sun Orchid** (*Thelymitra megalyptra*). It was formerly included in *T. nuda*. It differs from *T. nuda* by its more robust habit, larger flowers with overlapping perianth segments, and a more inflated column post-anther lobe. It grows north of the divide, whereas *T. nuda* is a southern species. Scented Sun Orchid is a moderately common and very showy species.

**Slender Sun Orchid** (*Thelymitra pauciflora*). It is pale flowered and opens tardily. A very common orchid.

Although typical plants of Scented Sun orchid and Slender Sun orchid are readily distinguished, there intermediates are often found that are difficult to identify.

## Uncommon Orchids of the Castlemaine District

These orchids have not been recorded by the Castlemaine F.N.C., but according to *Backhouse and Jeans*, occur in one of the district. Localities in this list identify the 10' blocks.

**Bronze Caladenia** (*Caladenia iridescens*). General shape is similar, to the Hooded Caladenia, but the flower is greenish brown, bronze or reddish purple. It is also smaller. Flowers Oct-Nov. Kyneton district.

**Magnificent Caladenia** (*Caladenia magnifica*). A spectacular, large, yellow-red spider orchid. Labellum dark red. Clydesdale; possibly extinct.

**Rosella Spider Orchid** (*Caladenia rosella*). A small pink spider orchid. Endangered. Hepburn.

**Slender Beard Orchid** (*Calochilus gracillimus*). Like the purple beard-orchid, but a more slender habit and sparser labellum hairs. Flowers in summer. Hepburn area.

**Donkey Orchid** (*Diuris corymbosa*). A southern species. Hepburn area.

**Short-lip Leek Orchid** (*Prasophyllum brevilabre*). Has a slender spike of well-spaced odourless flowers. Hepburn area.

**Slender Ruddyhood** (*Pterostylis aciculiformis*). Mostly from dryer inland areas. Two to four greenish brown flowers. Hepburn area.

**Large Rustyhood** (*Pterostylis maxima*). A member of the rufa group. Flowers glossy-white with reddish-brown markings. Muckleford area.

**Red-tip Greenhood** (*Pterostylis* sp affin *parvifolia*). Similar in appearance to the Tiny Greenhood, but the sinus does not protrude, and the tips of the brown tips to the sepals. Maldon district.

**Brittle Greenhood** (*Pterostylis truncata*). A large erect striped greenhood. Basalt and granite outcrops. Flowers April-May. Endangered.

**Robust Greenhood** (*Pterostylis valida*). A single known site in the Maldon District. Presumed extinct.

## NAME CHANGES FOR PLANTS

**Silky Hakea** or **Bushy Needlewood** has for some time been without a specific name. It is now *Hakea decurrens*. Decurrens refers to a leaf of which the stalk runs down the stem as a raised ridge or wing. It was formerly named *Hakea sericea*; this species is now thought to be confined to NSW. Silky Hakea is no longer appropriate as the common name of our local species.

**Billy Buttons**. The species found in this district is now *Craspedia variabilis*. In recent editions of the Castlemaine Plant List it has been referred to as *Craspedia sp.*

**Yam Daisy** is *Microseris lanceolata*.

## CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PUBLICATIONS

Botanic Gardens Tree List 20c

Castlemaine Bird List \$1

Castlemaine Plant List Edn 9 \$2

Castlemaine Plants for Castlemaine Gardens 30c

Eucalypts of the Castlemaine Area \$1

Fryerstown Tour 20c

Geological Features of the Castlemaine Area 50

Kalimna walking Track. 20c

Lawn and Garden Weeds 30c

Mineral Springs Tour 20c

Mt Alexander Tour 20c

Native Plants for Castlemaine Gardens 30c

Street Trees of Castlemaine \$1

Walk in Norwood Hill Bushland 50c.

Wattles of the Castlemaine Area \$1

Wildflowers of the Castlemaine Goldfields \$1

The Orchid publications have been withdrawn from sale, pending revision.

*An invitation to The president and members of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club to attend the launch of Shire of Mt Alexander (Maldon District)*

### **ROADSIDE MANAGEMENT PLAN and ROADSIDE CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT MAP**

*The official presentation of this innovative poster by Chief Commissioner Mostyn Thompsom will occur on the roadside at the end of the seal, Lewis Road, 1.4 km east of the Maldon-Lockwood Road and 4.2 km west of the Muckleford-Walmer Road, on Friday 17 November 1995 at 11 am.*

*To confirm your attendance please phone (054) 72 1611. In the event of inclement weather, the presentation will take place in the Maldon Community Centre, Francis St, Maldon.*

**Committee.** C Morris (Pres), G Broadway (VP), M Willis (Sec), B Envall (Treas), K Turner (Prog), R Mills (Public Officer & Newsletter), E Perkins, M Oliver, S Parnaby, S Bruton, and B Maund.

**This Newsletter.** Prepared by E. Perkins.

**New members.** Welcome to Eirlys and Gordon Farrant, Calimno, Deniliquin.

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

## CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

*Excursions leave promptly at the stated times. Visitors are welcome to attend the Club's sessions. Monthly meetings Feb-Dec. Excursions as advertised.*

**Fri 10 Nov. Pond Life.** Speaker is Alan Reid. Included in his many achievements are: Education Officer of the Aust Conservation Foundation from 1970-1986; foundation of the Environmental Studies Association; presidency of the Gould League of Victoria; and winner of the Australian Natural History Medal in 1993. 8.00 pm at Continuing Education, Lyttleton St.

**Sat 11 Nov. Bell's Swamp.** Looking at pond wildlife, pond plants, and birds. Leave CHIRP, 13 Mostyn St at 1.30 pm. Leader is Chris Morris.

**Thurs 16 Nov Oct. Bird Watching.** Meet Continuing Education carpark at 9.30 am. With Castlemaine U3A members. Location to be decided on the morning.

**Fri 17 Nov. Launch of Maldon Roadside Map** at 11 pm in Lewis Road, Maldon. Club members are invited. See invitation notice page 7.

**Thurs 23 Nov. Business Meeting.** 38 Campbell St at 7.30 pm. Members are invited.

**Fri 8 Dec. Members and Visitors Night.** This is the final meeting for the year. Members are asked to contribute a short segment for the meeting. Bring a plate for supper. Continuing Education Building, Templeton St at 8 pm.

**Sat 9 Dec. North British Mine and west side of Mt Tarrengower.** Met at CHIRP, 13 Mostyn St. Leader is M Oliver. Time to be decided at the Friday meeting, it will depend on weather conditions.

**Fri 9 Feb. Annual Meeting and 20th Birthday.** Speakers will be 4 foundation members; George Broadway, Rita Mills, Geoff Sitch and Ern Perkins. Supper.

**Sat 10 Feb. Birthday Lunch in the Botanic Gardens.** A BYO lunch. 12 noon, at the Rose Gardens car park. This is near the new band rotunda. Lunch will be followed by commemorative tree planting in Urquhart St (south of the highway, near the creek.)

**Sun 11 Feb. Dawn Breakfast at Kalimna Point.** Our birthday continued. 6 am at Kalimna Point. You may be earlier if you wish. From the east end of Lyttleton St, drive about 200 m north along Kalimna Tourist Road to the Kalimna Point car park. We will watch the sun rise from the hilltop, about 50 m *east* of the car park. Then BYO breakfast, in the band rotunda, on the *west* side of the road.

**Fri 8 Mar. Walking in Nepal.** Speaker Bruce Douglas.

**March 8-11th. VFNCA campout at Mt Portsea.** See article page 7 of Castlemaine Naturalist, October 1995, for program and booking details.

**Fri 12 Apr. Introduction to Beetles.** Speaker is Peter Kelly.

**Fri 10 May. Waders in Siberia.** Speaker is Mike Weston.

**Fri 12 July. Some Birds of the Castlemaine District.** Program by Club members.

---

### Subscriptions 1995

Ordinary membership: Single \$14; Family \$20

Pensioner/student: Single \$10; Family \$16.

Supporting membership: \$25.

Newsletter posted: Subscription plus \$6.00