

Castlemaine Naturalist

December 2005

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Seasons Greetings
and
Best wishes for the
New Year!

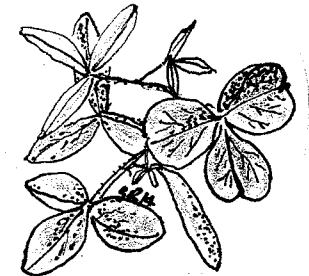


Another Rare Find - Natalie de Maccus.

Having been impressed by the profusion of flowering Grass Trigger-plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) seen on the November excursion to Wewak Track/Porcupine Ridge, I inspected our Grass Trigger-plant which was in bud the last time I had observed it. We have a dozen acres of bush at Barkers Creek.

As I headed back to the car, I walked through a rocky area, which has a great variety of wild flowers. I must have traversed this area hundreds of times. I was stopped in my tracks by a small (about the size of a saucer and 2-3 inches high) plant, which I had never seen before. It was nestled into a rocky crevice. I sat staring at it, willing it to turn into something I recognized. It didn't. I took away a mental picture of it, which I wondered about all weekend. I looked in books and consulted the Castlemaine Plant List. My optimistic streak said this was a rare plant. Two days later I phoned Geraldine who volunteered to look at it. In my enthusiasm I had decided it was *Glycine latrobeana* (Clover Glycine). Nothing short of rare would satisfy me. Geraldine agreed that my guess might be correct. She patiently sketched the plant in the wild conditions of Tuesday 15th November. She duly showed the sketch to Ern Perkins who also thought the plant might be *Glycine latrobeana*. On Monday 21st November Ern and Lesley arrived with a large book and dried specimens of likely plants. Ern worked his way through the key and finally pronounced the plant to be *Glycine latrobeana*. Rare and endangered!

Could I urge all Field Naturalists who are fortunate enough to have a piece of bush to look carefully when they walk through it lest they miss a treasure? Or as elegized by Thomas Gray "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen And waste its sweetness on the desert air." Our previous rare find was *Caesia calliantha* (Blue Grass-lily) about five years ago.



Field sketch of
Natalie's Clover Glycine.

PS. The Grass Trigger-plant was flowering.

Thornbills - Nigel Harland

The family of Thornbills comprises 13 different species found all over Australia. They are probably the most difficult of all species to differentiate. Some are found on the ground, but in most instances they skulk behind leaves or move so quickly that they are hard to identify. Differences in plumage and general behaviour can be difficult to distinguish. Nine of the thirteen species can be found in Victoria including the Weebill, which is not strictly a Thornbill, but is close enough.

The Brown Thornbill (a) is a common bird of our region. It is usually found in the lower to mid strata of shrubs or trees. It is a highly active bird with a large variety of calls. It has distinct striations on the breast, scallops on the forehead and a red eye. The reddish brown rump is not always easy to identify. It is easily confused with the Striated Thornbill, which has distinctive streaks on the top of its head.

The Striated Thornbill (b) is also a common resident of our region. It is very similar to the Brown Thornbill, but lacks the reddish brown rump and has distinct striations on its head. It also has a much plainer "zit-zit" call.

The Yellow-rumped Thornbill (c) is another sedentary bird common in our area. It is the largest of the Thornbills, has a white eyebrow, distinctly spotted crown and a bright yellow rump, which is highly noticeable during flight. It is almost exclusively a ground feeder, flying into the cover of lower branches if disturbed. Its song is also easily identifiable, a descending warbling effect, repeated a number of times. It hops on the ground on the edge of woodlands and allows close contact.

The Buff-rumped Thornbill (d) is a similar species found in similar locations. It is also a ground feeder and allows reasonably close contact. It lacks the white eyebrow and spots on the crown. The rump is yellow (noticeable in flight), but is much less distinct than the Yellow-rumped.

The Yellow Thornbill (e) is distinctly yellow and has few, if any, other distinguishing features – perhaps just some streaks around the eye. It is a small and often solitary bird.

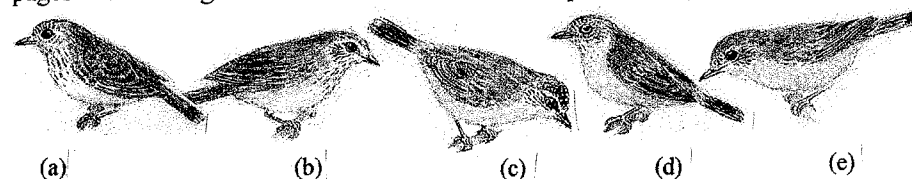
The Chestnut-rumped Thornbill is a bird generally found in the drier more northern regions. It is a fairly plain bird with whitish underparts and darker grey upperparts. The rump is distinctly chestnut and is easy to identify. Areas around the eye and top of the head are faintly scalloped. The bird is found in the lower areas of mulga and similar trees or shrubs.

The Inland Thornbill is found in areas even further to the north. It is very similar to the Brown Thornbill and has only recently been identified as a separate species. The best way to identify it in Victoria is by location – it is found in the Mallee country, whereas the Brown Thornbill is not.

The Slender Billed Thornbill is only found in the far west of the State, perhaps in the Big Desert or Little Desert areas of the Wimmera. It is a greyish hue with indistinct striations on the head and upper breast. It is not a common bird.

The Weebill is not strictly a Thornbill. It is the smallest bird on the Continent and has a blunt bill compared with the Thornbills. It has a basically yellow plumage, being slightly darker on top. Its voice is a carrying "weebill weebill", which is not difficult to recognise! It is normally found higher up in Eucalypts than most Thornbills.

These are all the Thornbills found in Victoria and as you can see, some are easier to identify than others. Depending on my mood at the time I will often record them as Thornbill sp rather than spend time trying to identify them! There is only one species I have to find – the Slaty Backed Thornbill, found in central and western locations. Once I have found that one I think I will seal up the pages in the field guide which cover Thornbills and pretend they don't exist!!



Drawings taken from Semmens, J. 2002 *Bush Seasons – An affectionate Study of a Tiny Bushland*, Hyland House Publishing Pty Ltd, Flemington.

** This is an excellent Christmas gift for anyone interested in nature.

Committee Members for 2006

Nomination forms for election of Committee Members have been enclosed in this month's newsletter. New Committee Members are being sought for 2006 so please nominate someone you think would be a valuable committee member or consider offering yourself for nomination. Our clubs longstanding success is a credit to those few individuals who have filled positions, in some cases, for many of those 30 years. Why not show your appreciation by sharing the load – and offering your unique input into next years business meetings.'

Front page: Christmas Greetings Flower - Christmas Bush
(*Prostranthera lasiantho*).

Wewak Track - Porcupine Ridge 12/11/05. Leader: Richard Piesse.

This time last year, Richard was impressed by a sea of colour in this area and suggested it as a possible excursion location for late spring 2005. His foresight was rewarded this month when nineteen people were treated to a wonderful display of wildflowers in this same area of bushland. Of particular interest were the lovely yellow flowers of the Common Wedge-pea (*Gompholobium Huegelii*), the Twiggy Bush-pea (*Pultenaea largiflorens*) and the rare Fryerstown Grevillea (*Grevillea obtecta*) with its very subtle green and brown flower.

Other plants noted included:

Downy Grevillea (*Grevillea alpina*), Showy Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia sericea*), Black's Goodenia (*Goodenia blackiana*), Black-anther Flax-lily (*Dianella admixta*), Grass Trigger Plant (*Stylidium ameriea*), Common Raspwort (*Gonocarpus tetragynus*), Wattle Mat-rush (*Lomandra filiformis*), Mitchell's Wattle (*Acacia mitchellii*), Milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*), White Marianth (*Rhytidisporum procumbens*), Slender Rice-flower (*Pimilea linifolia*), Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia sp.*), Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*), Tall Sundew (*Drosera peltata ssp auriculata*), Honeypots (*Acrotiche serrulata*), Heath Tea-tree (*Leptospermum myrsinoides*), Grey Tussock-grass (*Poa sieberiana var sieberiana*), Common Fringe Lily (*Thysanotus tuberosus*), Pale Sundew (*Drosera peltata ssp peltata*), Hairy Geebung (*Persoonia rigida*), Creamy Candles (*Stackhousia monogyna*), Matted Bush-pea (*Pultenaea pedunculata*), Pink-bells (*Tetradthea ciliata*), Coffee Bush (*Cassinia arcuata*), Common Beard-heath (*Leucopogon virgatus*), Wattle Mat-rush (*Lomandra filiformis*), Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra sp.*), Slender Groundsel (*Senecio phelleus*), Many-flowered Mat-rush (*Lomandra multiflora*), Sticky Everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*), Common Rice-flower (*Pimilea humilis*) and Wiry Buttons (*Leptorhynchus tenuifolius*).

Geraldine Harris

P.S. "Regarding the moth we saw on the Wewak Track excursion – It's a Burnet, or *Zygaenid*, with the suitably splendid name of *Pollanisus viridipulverulenta*. Its larvae feed on buds and young leaves of *Hibbertia spp.* in late winter, and the moth emerges in spring. Most *Zygaenidae* are diurnal. The genus is endemic to Australia and this moth has a wide range from Cape York to Tasmania and over to south-western Australia."

Tony Morton

Editor's note: The moth Tony is referring to was a small metallic blue-green moth that some of us saw among the plants that afternoon. If you can't quite manage *Pollanisus viridipulverulenta*, it's common name is Satin-green Forester.

Walking and Wildflowers – Richard Piesse

Richard made these lists during Spring 2005. A complete record of Richard's Wildflower Walks will be available at the December Meeting.

1/10/05 GDTA Walk – Bendigo Railway Station to Sandhurst Reservoir

Aacias (acinacea, aspera, paradoxa, pycnantha), *Phillotheca verrucosa*, *Grevillea alpina*, *G. dryophylla*, *Davesia ulicifolia*, *Tetradthea ciliata*, *Hibbertia exutiacies*, *Pimelea linifolia*, *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Euromythus ramosissima*, *Drosera peltata ssp.*, *Craspedia variabilis*, *Microseris sp 3*, *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, *Xerochrysum viscosum*, *Dillwynia sericea*, *Rhytidisporum procumbens*, Pink Fingers, *Glossodia major* (1000's), *Thelymitra megcalyptra* (100's).

8/10/05 Campbell's Creek Channel/ Poverty Gully Water Race (from Eureka Reef).

Aacias (acinacea, aspera, paradoxa, pycnantha), *Davesia ulicifolia*, *D. leptophylla*, *Platylobium formosum*, *Tetradthea ciliata*, *Stackhousia monogyna*, *Pimelea linifolia*, *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Phillotheca verrucosa*, *Goodenia blackiana*, *Rhytidisporum procumbens*, *Drosera peltata ssp.*, *Dianella admixta*, *Craspedia variabilis*, *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, *Xerochrysum viscosum*, *Microseris sp 3*, *Wurbea dioica*, *Thysanotus patersonii*, *Leptorhynchus squarmatus*, *Glossodia major*, *Diuris sulphurea*, Pink Fingers?, Green-comb Spider Orchid?, *Caladenia culculata/ fuscata*?

9/10/05 GDTA Walk – Sandhurst Res., Coliban Main Channel, Big Hill Range Circuit.

Aacias (acinacea, aspera, paradoxa), *Grevillea alpina*, *G. dryophylla*, *Davesia ulicifolia*, *D. leptophylla*, *Euromythus ramosissima*, *Goodenia blackiana*, *Hibbertia exutaacies*, *H. riparia*, *Leucopogon virgatus*, *Phillotheca verrucosa*, *Pimelea linifolia*, *Tetradthea ciliata*, *Melichrus urceolatus*, *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Kennedia prostrata*, *Stackhousia monogyna*, *Microseris sp 3*, *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, *Xerochrysum viscosum*, *Chrysocephalum semipapposum*, *Dianella admixta*, *Craspedia variabilis*, *Arthropodium strictum*, *Ranunculus sp.*, *Wurbea dioica*, *Drosera peltata ssp.*, *Thysanotus patersonii*, *Glossodia major*, Pink Fingers ?, *Diuris sulphurea*, Green-comb Spider Orchid?, *Caladenia culculata/ fuscata*, *Bulbine bulbosa*.

Observations

- Masses of Tiger Orchids (*Diuris sulphurea*) at Pollinelli's at Mia Mia and no Milkmaids at Lauriston this October – so last years abundance must have been a direct result of the severe burn in that area. Penny Garnett
- A drooping form of Peppermint Gum and a White-necked Heron and a Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo at Cobaw. Robyn van Smeerdijk

- The Swift Parrots that arrived in late March, departed on the 14th October after spending 216 days in Castlemaine. With little blossom during most of this time, they appear to have lived mainly on lerps. Black-chinned Honeyeaters and Brown Tree-creepers still about. Debbie Worland
- Liz Freeman has been observing the "tough love" of Magpie parenting – with the parent bird feeding the young bird sometimes but also belting him when he fails to feed himself.
- A Gold Finch and two Zebra Finches at the bird bath. Natalie de Maccus
- Musk lorikeets and Purple-Crowned Lorikeets in very large numbers have replaced the Swift Parrots in Ross Drive. Also a very large Shingleback trailing a much smaller female across the driveway. Hans van Gemert
- Large Blue Tongue with jaw very firmly clenched on a smaller one – a different form of "tough love" perhaps? Phee Broadway
- Little Lorikeets in the Fryerstown Cemetery – easily identified as a dead young one found on the road. Lesley Perkins
- An echidna walking on the beach – out for a morning paddle perhaps? Anne van Gemert.
- Musk Lorikeets attracted to Red-flowering Gums and Banksias. Joy Weatherall
- Mopoke back in town. Ern Perkins. Boobook too, (Rita Mills); and at Chewton (Penny Garnett); lots of frogs calling as creeks start to run (Debbie Worland).
- During the 2nd week in Nov - 35 Eltham Butterfly caterpillars were counted in Kalimna between 9pm and 10.30pm. Ern Perkin
- Rae Hawkins reported watching a Sacred Kingfisher for about ten minutes along the flat stretch before Tunnel Hill between Chewton and Elphinstone.
- Blue Pincushions, Curved Rice Flower in bloom at Barkers Ck. G. Harris
- On return after five days away – *Pultenaea pendunculata* in carpets. Hans Van Gemert
- On way to Bealiba stopped by koala crossing the road. George Broadway
- 500+ Forked-tailed Swifts ahead of storm at Golden Point. Ian O'Halloran
- Fat skink feeding on ants was quick to defend his territory when another skink came to partake as well. Rita Mills
- Good show of flowers in Quartz Hill Track, particularly *Spyridium parvifolium* and *Grevillea parviflora* still flowering at Muckleford. Water Hens and Wood Duck families on Lake Joanna in the Gardens. Grevilleas in Wewak Track. Richard Piesse
- Frank and Ethel Blake timed a return trip to Castlemaine recently in order to see Duck Orchids in flower at Glenluce.
- A noise at the window alerted Geoff Harris to a Tree Dragon working its way along the window attacking its own reflection in the glass.

Keeping up with Change.

With many plants groups being revised and many new species being described, it is hard to keep up with the changes. Ern and Lesley Perkins in their Research Report in "Growing Australian", Australian Plants Society (SGAP Victoria), September 2005, have offered a solution -

"The many changes taking place provide a problem for gardeners who wish to use the current correct name. One solution is to keep the old name, and add s.lat. (sensu lato meaning in the broad sense), as opposed to s.str. (sensu stricto meaning in the narrow sense)."

Thank you - Contributors

Thank you to all those who contributed to the Castlemaine Naturalist this year. Of late my job has been reduced to simply finding space to include your wonderful contributions - the variety and interest has been provided very successfully by member contributions! So keep your note pads handy over the Christmas period and I look forward to hearing from you in time for the February 2006 edition (deadline, 1/2/06).

Geraldine Harris, PO Box 703, CASTLEMAINE, 3450 Ph. 5474 2244, gedharris@castlemaine.net

From the Business Meeting 24/11/05

- Ern has removed some milk cartons in Botanic Gardens. More to go.
- Screen saver. Contributions have been received, more required. Selection panel to view slides at Ern's in the new year.
- Eureka Reef Survey. A separate list for each sub-area has been prepared. Needs further survey to identify plants in other seasons. Photos of plants needed, preferably taken at Eureka.
- Purchase of a Digital Projector. Huge variation in prices and also quality of output. Research ongoing.
- Rita investigating Nodding Greenhoods or Crimson Spider Orchid for new coloured club logo.
- Amended letter to Council re Highway trees sent. Copy in file.
- CFNC to support Muckleford Landcare organising series of talks in 2006 showing features of our bushland for landowners.
- Club to support move by local environmental groups to use common name "Goldfields Everlasting" to replace "Sticky/Golden Everlasting" for *Xerochrysum viscosum*.

Website: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~cfnc>

CastlemaineField Naturalists Club Inc., PO Box 324, Castlemaine. Inc #A0003010B

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme – December 2005

General meetings (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm.

Excursions (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the carpark opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at 27 Doveton Street, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS.

Fri 9 Dec. Members and Visitors Night. Members provide short presentations – a few slides, a short talk, an interesting nature experience etc. Be as creative as you like. Bring a plate of supper to share. UCA hall at 8pm.

Sat 10 Dec. Christmas Picnic Tea Excursion - Blackwood. Depart from carpark opposite the motel in Duke St at 3pm sharp to travel in convoy (via Daylesford, Bullarto, Newbury) or make your own way to Blackwood (meet at the General Store at 4.15pm). BYO drinks and evening meal, BBQ facilities available. Contact: Richard Piesse, Ph 5472 3191.

2006

Thu Jan 5. Dawn Breakfast – South German Mine. Depart from carpark opposite the motel in Duke St at 6am. BYO breakfast, chairs, binoculars etc. Contact: A. Oliver, Ph 5472 1948.

Sun Jan 15. Excursion with Ringwood Club to Mount Pilot (Broadford, Kilmore area). Contact Ern Perkins if interested, Ph. 5472 3124.

Jan 16 –Feb 2. ANN Get-together -High Country in the Alpine Spring. Host: SEANA. At Harrietville until Jan 26, then at Jindabyne. Bookings still possible. Contact Ern Perkins, Ph. 5472 3124.

Fri Feb 10. AGM) and Clubs 30th Birthday Celebrations. Election of Office Bearers and Committee, followed by **Thirty Years of Change.** Rita Mills (2nd President of CFNC – 1978/9). Bring a plate of supper to share. UCA Hall, 8pm.

Sat Feb 11. Ray Bradfield Memorial Excursion – Chewton, Fryerstown and Vaughan. BYO drinks and evening meal. Depart from carpark opposite the motel in Duke St at 1.30pm. Leader: Ern Perkins, Ph. 5472 3124.

2005 Committee

Rita Mills (Pres).....Ph. 5472 4553 George Broadway (Sec)....Ph. 5472 2513

Hans van Gemert (Treas).Ph. 5472 1082 Richard Piesse.....Ph.5472 3191

Ern Perkins (Web).....Ph. 5472 3124 Athol Dorman.....Ph. 5472 4429

Nigel Harland.....Ph. 5474 8246 Chris MorrisPh. 9885 4221

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