

# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

DECEMBER 1990 #163

## THOSE BLACK BIRDS



There is little difficulty in distinguishing the Australian crows and ravens provided that you can have a good look at the throat feathers of the bird you want to identify. Crows have feathers with a white base. Those of the raven are ashy-grey. The shapes are distinctive too.

The R.A.O.U. atlas records only the Australian raven and the little raven for the Castlemaine district. You have a 50% chance of correct identification of a local raven with no further effort!

Both of our ravens are glossy black birds with white eyes. Young birds of both species have brown eyes. The little raven is slightly smaller than the Australian raven, and has a less massive bill. Both are scavengers with insects, grain and carrion the main foods.

Throat  
hackle



A. raven

The Australian raven is sedentary, with each pair occupying a territory of about 110 hectares in which the birds brood, roost, and obtain most of their food. The little raven is nomadic, and sometimes forms flocks of hundreds of birds. The Australian raven is more solitary. The two species may be in the same area, the same flock, and even nest in the same tree. The Australian ravens nest is generally at least 13 metres above the ground. The little raven mostly nests below 10 metres.

Throat  
hackle



L. raven

The Australian raven has long pointed floppy throat hackles which often form a beard when the bird is calling. When making its territorial call it lowers its head. Its head, body and tail are almost horizontal. It has a slow wailing call, with the last note drawn out, descending, and ending in a gargle. Aah aah aah aaaaahh.

The call of the little raven is much more rapid. Each note is cut off, and there is no final gargle. Car car car car. Pizzey says that the little raven typically gives a quick upward flip of its wings with each note.

The throat hackles are shorter than those of the Australian raven, are not fanned to make a beard when the

bird is calling, and are not pointed.  
In this district, I hear Australian ravens more often  
than I hear little ravens.

The specimen at the October meeting, with its grey base  
feathers and pointed throat hackles was an Australian  
raven.

L.P.

## BIRDING BACK O' BOURKE

We travelled a huge rectangle of country: straight up  
middle NSW from Deniliquin to Bourke, going just far  
enough east to be able to ford the flooded Lachlan  
River. We reached Cunnamulla in Queensland and turned  
west to a camp site called Euro Bore. All the "towns"  
here are just tiny villages.

The grey grass wrens (discovered in 1967) live along the  
margins of a swamp called the Bulloo Overflow, where the  
Bulloo River peters out. They are very hard to see, and  
very hard to approach. However, once seen, the party  
spreads out and surrounds the lignum thicket slowly and  
on all sides. Then the wren sees men everywhere, so it  
freezes or hops around thicket. It is the prettiest of  
the four grass wren species that we saw.

Going south from the remote area of grey grass wren one  
comes to Tibbooburra in far north-west NSW, and en route  
we saw this amazing sight of at least 100 wedge-tail  
eagles air-borne at once. The country was infested with  
rabbits, but not so the other areas west of here.

We skirted the Sturt National Park near Tibbooburra,  
camping one night at Fort Grey amongst dozens of other  
people, which was quite a come-down after our previous  
remote area camps. Still we did see a lot of wildlife,  
especially raptors. The drive west of Sturt national  
Park over the sand dunes to Murti Murti on the old  
Strezlecki Track and Creek is very interesting, and  
there were interesting plants. Phil Maher is a wonderful  
bushman, ornithologist, and field naturalist. He is  
seldom unable to identify a plant. He also has extra-  
ordinary eyesight and powers of observation, combined  
with a knowledge about where birds are living or likely  
to live. In the evenings he would regularly go for bush  
walks, looking for night life!

Murti Murti is the home of the Eyrean grass wren,  
amongst other places, but said to be the best. As at  
Euro, we spent two nights there; later we did the same  
at Hattah (striated grass wren). He found the Eyreans at  
nest with young birds, not quite able to fly. I guess it  
took about an hour to track them down and approach them.  
The adults I saw at 5-10 yards distance; but he picked  
up one of the young birds.

Whilst searching for one of these, and other small rare birds, the "nuisances" are ordinary wrens like variegated wrens, white-winged wrens etc.!

Quail-thrushes! We saw three varieties, all very difficult to approach, but wonderful birds.

Babblers! We saw all four species, including a battle between a pair of chestnut-crowned and grey-crowned for possession of a nest site.

Parrots! The inland parrots were nearly all new to me, not having been in this country before.

Raptors! Only of the party saw a grey falcon, but we all saw the black. We missed out on the letter-winged kites to our surprise. We saw several peregrines and little falcons, including an injured little falcon which we picked up.

Barn owl. My sole contribution was to be first to see it! It was being mobbed by a crowd of grey-crowned babblers in a tree.

Honeyeaters. I saw my first "painted" and also white-fronted, black, and purple-gaped honeyeaters. However, I couldn't find a striped honeyeater which the others saw.

The wildflowers of central NSW and southern Queensland were fabulous, as were the variety of non-eucalypt trees.

The plains wanderers near Wananelia were unforgettable. Phil spot-lights them and then catches them either by hand or by a net (when he is doing banding). I have stroked a plains wanderer's little head and I have caught a little button-quail. I don't suppose that I will ever repeat that.

White, scarlet, orange and desert (gibber) chats, chirruping wedge-bills, Australian dotterel (injured), red-kneed dotterel, flock pigeon (pair), ground cuckoo-shrike, and nearly all the wood swallows, white-backed swallows. The list goes on and on .....

Colin Officer, provided by C. Norwood.

## OBSERVATIONS FOR NOVEMBER

A POOR ORCHID YEAR. This has been an excellent year for wattles, and some of the very late spring flowers (such as bottlebrushes) have been very showy. As well as being poor for orchids, it has been poor for many of the small annuals, such as millotia, and other small daisies. Why is this. Suggestions include a dry autumn, insufficient

frost, or dry mid-spring. Do you have a suggestion?

BIRD NOTES: PEREGRINE FALCON has been seen in happy valley (Kalimna east) by B. Singleton. CUCKOOS and ORIOLES have been common this year. FRIARBIRDS have continued to be seen at Castlemaine Nth. RUFOUS WHISTLERS are often heard in the township. BLUE-FACED HONEYEATER was seen at Huntly on 25/11/90, flying over the highway. MUSK LORIKEETS have been in gum blossom in the town. A flock of many hundred SILVER GULLS was seen at Stanhope, also on 25/11/90. RED-BACKED KINGFISHER has been reported from the Maryborough district by R. Bishop. BEE-EATERS were seen about 1 km east of the Fryerstown oval.

BRACHYSCOME DIVERSIFOLIA was displayed at the meeting. It was found in the Fryers Ridge forest, and is the first record for the Club's plant list. It is a tall (30-40 cm) showy daisy. It was recorded from Ravenswood in 1868, so perhaps grazing has reduced its number.

BALLARAT F.N.C. observations at Enfield include a number of white spotted sun-orchids (rather than the usual blue form), and a beardless beard-orchid.

CAPER WHITE BUTTERFLIES were present in thousands throughout the district early in November.

ADDITIONS TO THE PLANT LIST LOCALITY RECORDS INCLUDE  
Common spike-rush (West side of Mt Tarrengower, H54)  
Link's wallaby grass (north of Nuggetty, area 0)  
Bristly wallaby grass (Baringhup, H54)  
Pellisser's toad-flax (Castlemaine railway station)  
Sweet vernal grass (Humbolt and Camp Reserve).

FROM OUR CHEWTON CORRESPONDENT. INDIAN MYNAHS have been seen at Chewton (east of the cemetery). A resident RUFOUS WHISTLER comes to the window, and whistles into it. This occurs even if the window is open.

**MAID MARION, BUSH PENNIES,  
NUT-BROWN MAID & GLORIANA.**

Recently, I was given a copy of an article from the Bendigo Advertiser, written by Walter K. Bissill, of Belvoir Park, near Ravenswood. The date was Jan 23rd, 1868. In it he gives a list of plants seen at Ravenswood, and also for many of the plants, the common name.

This article gives some of the common names used by Bissill, where these are different to those used now. They are arranged giving the current scientific name, the old common name and current common name as given in the Club's plant list. This latter name is given in brackets.

## 1. NAMES THAT SHOULD BE RE-ADOPTED

*Acacia genistifolia* (spine leaved wattle) [spreading wattle]. This name was given when the Latin name was *A. diffusa*, meaning spreading. It is no longer appropriate, especially as the wattle is not particularly spreading.

*Grevillea alpina*, downy *Grevillea* [Cat's claws]. 'Cat's claws' is seldom used. Other names are 'alpine grevillea' (although it is not found in the Alps), or 'hill grevillea' (as a compromise from alpine or mountain) or 'goldfield's grevillea' (a name shared by other grevilleas). *G. alpina* has downy leaves, and so 'downy grevillea' seems quite appropriate.

*Hydrocotyle laxiflora*, bush pennies [stinking pennywort]  
What a poor name we have for this attractive plant!  
Bush pennies is much better. But should we go decimal?

## 2. INTERESTING AND DESCRIPTIVE NAMES

*Cheiranthra cyanea*, blue gauntlet [finger flower]

*Tetratheca ciliata*, purple drops [pink bells].

Sometimes called black-eyed susan. Neither are very satisfactory, and the flowers are not exactly pink.

*Daviesia ulicifolia*, red russot [gorse bitter-pea]

*D. leptophylla*, nut-brown maid [narrow-leaf bitter-pea]

*Swainsona phacoides*, purple crowtoes [swainsona] This species is not on our list.

*Acacia pycnantha*, Gloriana [golden wattle]. All wattles are more or less golden, but can we change the common name of Australia's national emblem?

*Grevillea dryophylla*, native holly [goldfield's grev]

*Eucalyptus polyanthemos*, poplar leaved box [red box]

This is probably a better name than 'red box', except that 'red box' is firmly established.

*Leptospermum myrsinoides*, maid marion, [heath tea-tree]

*Podolepis jaceoides*, lucky digger [showy podolepis]

*Craspedia glauca*, golden cushions [common billy-buttons]

*Helipereum anthemoides*, silverlings [chamomile sunray]

*Hyalosperma demissum*, coronets [moss sunray]

*Helichrysum apiculatum*, dust o'gold [common everlasting]

It may occur frequently, but it is not common in looks.

*H. semipapposum*, nuggets [clustered everlasting]. Another daisy where the old name is much more descriptive.

*H. scorpioides*, moons [button everlasting]. It's a pale yellow daisy, so 'moons' fits well.

*H. viscosum*, golden crowns [sticky everlasting]

*H. obcordatum*, silver green [grey everlasting]. The leaves are green on top and silver below.

*Rutidosus multiflora*, tiny cauliflowers [small wrinkle-wort]. The flower heads look like tiny cauliflowers.

What does a wrinkled wort look like?

*Velleia paradoxa*, yellow butterflies [spur velleia]  
*Pratia pedunculata*, blink bonnies [matted pratia]  
*Leucopogon virgatus*, snowdrift [common beard-heath]  
*Dianella revoluta*, star and garter [black-anther flax-lily]. A noble flower?  
*Stackhousia monogyna*, milkmaids [candles]. We give the name 'milkmaids' to one of the lilies.  
*Einada nutans*, coral berries [nodding saltbush]  
*Chamaescilla corymbosa*, blue eyes [blue squill]  
*Microtis* sp., green helmets [onion orchids]  
*Calochilus robertsonii*, the grand Turk [purple beard-o].  
*Thelymitra pauciflora* & *nuda*, purple mitres [slender & scented sun-orchids]. It's hard to see the mitres?  
*T. antennifera*, orange and lemons [rabbit's ears]  
*Wurmbea dioica*, star of Bethlehem [early Nancy]  
*Dichopogon strictus*, hay-scented lily [chocolate lily].  
 Smelling trials are needed to settle this.  
*Arthropodium minus*, pink and white fairybells [small vanilla lily]  
*Caladenia cucullata* and *C. gracilis*, Cockatoo [hooded and musk caladenias]. No doubt from the whitish colour.  
*C. dilatata*, bird of paradise [greencomb spider-orchid]

### 3. OTHER COMMON NAMES

*Drosera glanduligera*, vermillion flowered sundew [scarlet sundew]  
*D. whittakeri*, native primrose [scented sundew]  
*D. peltata*, shield-leaved sundew [pale sundew]  
*Viola betonicifolia*, narrow leaved violet [showy v.]  
*Bursaria spinosa*, spiny purse-bearer, "native myrtle", and "box" of Tasmania [sweet bursaria]  
*Eriostemon verrucosus*, pink and white waxflower [fairy waxflower]  
*Sagina apetala*, minute pearlwort [common pearlwort]  
*Medicago polymorpha*, caterpillars [burr-medic]  
*Hovea linearis*, evergreen pea [common hovea]  
*Hardenbergia violacea*, blue climber or sarsparilla [purple coral-pea]  
*Eryngium ovinum*, native eryngo [blue devil]  
*Hydrocotyle hirta*, ground ivy [hairy pennywort]  
*H. callicarpa*, tiny ivy [small pennywort]  
*Crassula sieberia*, native stonecrop [sieber stonecrop]  
*C. decumbens*, variegated stonecrop [spreading stonecrop]  
*Rubus parvifolius*, wild raspberry [small-leaved bramble]  
*Acaena ovina*, cleavers [woolly sheep's-burr]. We give the name 'cleavers' to an introduced scrambling weed.  
*Montia australasica*, fair maids [white purslane]  
*Myriophyllum* sp, feather foil [water milfoil]  
*Eucalyptus melliodora*, honey scented or yellow box  
*Brunonia australis*, blue bosses [blue pincushion]  
*Amyema pendula* & *A. miquellii*, green and silver mistletoes [drooping and box mistletoes]  
*Asperula conferta* (native woodruff)

Vittadenia sp, small Michaelmas daisies [New Holland daisy]

\*Arctotheca calendula, capeweed or sun rays [capeweed].  
'sun rays' for a weed like this!

Senecio quadridentatus, silver weed [fireweed grounseil]

Leptorrhynchos squamatus, bachelor's buttons [scaly b.]

Cotula coronopifolia, gold or marsh buttons [water b.]

Brachyscome diversifolia, dog daisy [tall daisy]

Stipa scabra, silk beards or tangles) [spear grass]

Solanum nigrum, triangles [black nightshade]

Phragmites australis, Prince's plumes [common reed]

Triglochin procera, water spikes [water ribbon]

Hypoxis vaginata, spring stars [yellow stars]

Bulbine bulbosa, tall yellow lily [bulbine lily]

Mentha australis, horse mint [river mint]

Polygonum aviculare, knot grass [knot-weed]

Thysanotus patersonii, creeping lily [climbing fringe-l.]

Pterostylis mutica, many hoods [swan greenhood]

P. biseta, harlequin [rusty hood]

#### 4. NAMES INFERIOR TO THOSE NOW USED

Correa reflexa, native fuchsia [common correa]

Pelargonium australe, "greenhouse geranium", [magenta stork's-bill]

Glycine clandestina, climbing vetch [climbing glycine]

Acacia paradoxa, prickly yellow wattle [hedge wattle]

A. mearnsii, fine leaved wattle [late black wattle]

A. gunnii, decumbent wattle, [ploughshare wattle]

Banksia marginata, tree honey-suckle [silver banksia]

Acaena anserinifolia, bur plant [bidgee-widgee]

Microseris lanceolata, yam hawkweed [yam]

Wahlenbergia sp, hair bell [bluebell]

Astroloma humifusum, glass bugles cranberries [cranberry heath]

Pleurosorus rutifolius, rue-leaved rock fern [blanket fern]

Asplenium flabellifolium, fan-leaved spleen-wort [necklace fern]

Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia, native parsley fern [rock fern]

Themeda triandra, tall knotted grass, the true kangaroo grass [kangaroo grass]

Convolvulus erubescens, pink convolvulus [pink bindweed]

Cassytha glabella, native dodder [slender dodder laurel]

Utrichularia dichotoma, navel-wort [fairies' aprons]

Stylidium graminifolium, skip-jack [grass trigger-plant]

Pterostylis longifolia, early green orchis [tall greenhood]

Glossodia major, purple or white tongue [waxlip orchid]

Diuris lanceolata, early yellow orchis [golden moths]

What do you think?

E.P.

## CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Fri 14 Dec. CASTLEMAINE BOTANIC GARDENS. Speaker is Kevin Walsh. This is the final meeting for the year - please bring supper.

Sat 15 Dec. GLENLUCE DISTRICT. Bird watching at Glenluce and possibly beyond. Departure time will depend on weather and will be arranged at the Friday meeting.

Thurs 24 Jan. COMMITTEE MEETING 7.30 p.m.

Fri 8 Feb. MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT. Annual meeting.

Mar 8-11. HOWMANS GAP. Labour Day weekend VFNCA and WVFNCA campout at Howmans Gap. organised by North East FNC. See separate notice.

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Meetings on the second Friday of each month (Jan excepted) at Castlemaine High School at 8.00 pm. Business meetings on the fourth Thursday at 38 Campbell St at 7.30 p.m. Visitors are invited to attend the Club's sessions.

SUPPER ROSTER for December : M & R Holden

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

Committee: Ern Perkins (Pres), Chris Norwood (V. Pres), Maggie Oliver (V. Pres), Barbara Maund (Sec), Clodagh Norwood (Treas), Kaye Turner, George Broadway, Rita Mills (Newsletter), Ian Higgins, Robyn Holden.

### Subscriptions

Student/Pensioner	\$5	Single	\$8
Family	\$12	Supporting	\$15
Newsletter posted: Subscription plus \$5.			

### HOWMANS GAP CAMPOUT.

Date: Fri Mar 8 - Mon 211 March (long weekend)

Host: North East (Wangaratta) F.N.C.

Location: Howmans Gap Alpine Camp

Accommodation: Modern chalet type building. Interior toilets and showers. 2-8 bunk room type sleeping.

Blankets & pillows provided, bring own linen.

Cost: \$70.00/head approx. Includes meals (except Frid)

Groups: botany, bird watching, photography, general, or full day walks. Detailed program in February.

Contact: Mrs Laurice Kneen RMB 7539 Wangaratta 3678

Register by Feb 8th. Registration forms from E. Perkins