

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

December 1991

No 174

RED-BROWED TREECREEPER AT DAYLESFORD.



At the conclusion of the recent outing to Tipperary Springs at Daylesford I was left to hitch a ride home with Kaye who already had our guests Pat and Jane with her. Instead of immediately following the general exodus from the springs area, we wandered along the creek, possibly with the idea of finding the mother Black Duck with her brood which Kaye and I had seen earlier. So it was that I found myself gazing at a smallish dark bird which seemed to be busy on a fallen log which, like the surrounding trees, had been blackened by a fairly recent fire. Realising that the bird was not the usual white-throated variety I was very thankful that Pat was nearby, and when I called her over she immediately confirmed my suspicion that it was in fact a Red-browed Treecreeper. At that we called Jane and Kaye to look but at that the bird took off into the bush. "Never fear", said Pat, "it will return". And sure enough, so it did. In a most obliging manner it came and perched on the side of a blackened tree, at about one metre from the ground, so that its full profile was displayed for us to admire. It remained in that position for what seemed like minutes while we all had an extremely good look.

I thought at first that we were outside the usual range, or at least on the edge. However, the Atlas records that there is a small isolated population in the Macedon-Daylesford area.

G. Broadway.

PHILANTHROPISTS OR BABY-SNATCHERS AT GUILDFORD?

A pair of resident Wood Duck (Maned Geese) appeared recently with a family of six babies. Five looked quite normal, but from the beginning, the sixth was noticeably smaller and darker. "Do we have a mutation or a runt?" I thought!

It was always difficult to observe the family clearly as their daily pattern of movements took them up onto the grass of the paddock only in the early morning and at dusk. At other times, when the light was better, any movement sent them scurrying into the shelter of cumbungi in the dam. As they grew, it was always the little one who was dashing about in front, or causing obvious concern to the parents because it wanted to stay longer in the water - definitely a problem child. Soon the markings became clear enough to indicate that the delinquent was in fact a Black Duckling.

What happened? Did the Black Duck parents hatch only one baby who was lonely and joined the accommodating Wood Duck family? Was it deserted by its parents, or did the Wood Duck "nest snatch"? I also wonder if it was the same pair of Wood Duck who "adopted" and attempted to raise 3 orphaned Black Ducklings which were brought to me a couple of years ago?

I wish I was like Dr Doolittle who could "talk to the animals"!

Beris Perry

RAINBOW BEACH - A SUB-TROPICAL BIRDWATCH

Of our 24 day holiday, of which 16 days were spent in Queensland, Rainbow Beach was our most northerly destination. Across from the southern-most tip of Fraser Island, Rainbow Beach is on the northern-most boundary of the superb Cooloolpa National Park, and the open coastal forest encroaches onto the town from the south like a wave. It is not a large town, around 800 people live there although developments are being made. It is a clean modern tourist town where shops sell goods at tourist-town prices. But nature is all around here. You don't have to go far to see it. As I said before, Rainbow Beach is surrounded by open coastal forest. Scribbly gums, angophoras and bloodwoods dominate, as well as tall banksias (as much as 5 metres) and many shrubs (some of which are quite interesting and unusual). Towards the coast the trees become windswept and stunted, and at the beach front the beautiful Beach She-oaks grow along refreshing beaches.

Rainforest is about a four kilometre walk from Rainbow Beach, and Bymien picnic area (in the rainforest) is accessible by conventional vehicle, but the road to Bymien is nothing to write home about.

Now to the birds. Rainbow Beach has a fascinating dawn chorus. At the caravan park, which is right in town, the distorted warbles of Little and Noisy Friarbirds and Blue-faced Honeyeaters started at 4.30 in the morning. These three honeyeaters were common around the town. The township supports a heathland at the shore, where I saw Varied Trillers, White-cheeked and Brown Honeyeaters, and others. At the foreshore

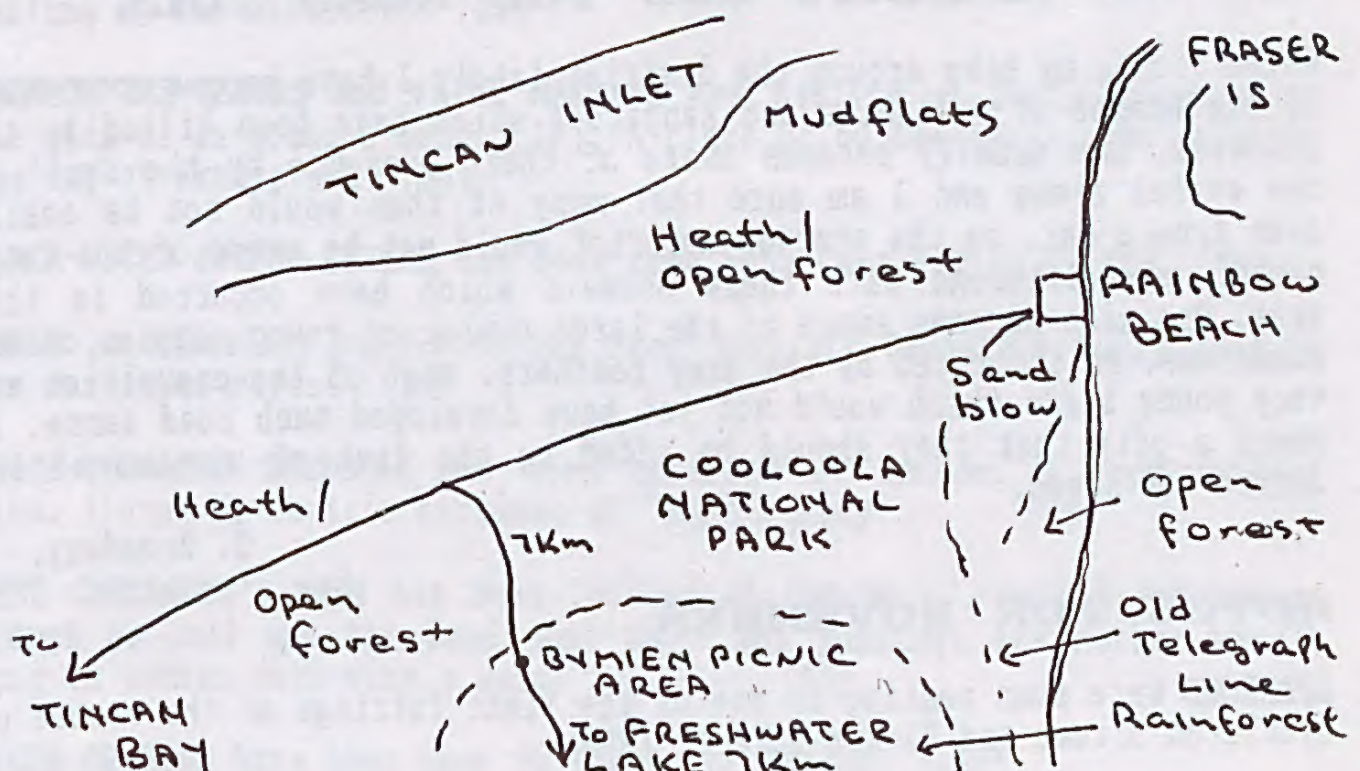
reserve (an open picnic area in the town, not a bush reserve), Tristan saw a black bird sitting on a power line. "Drongo!" he cried. Dad and I were just about to retort "Blackbird!" when we realised that we had left the blackbirds in Victoria and this bird had a funny tail. "Ye Gods, it is a Drongo!". The Drongos seemed to hang around the town quite successfully, sitting on aerials and power lines like starlings (but only in ones and twos though).

The open forest on the old telegraph line and also just near the sand-blow was full of birds. Whistling Kites were nesting behind a block of houses, virtually in the town.

Interesting birds of the open forest were Little Shrike-thrushes, (they inhabit coastal forest as well as rainforest), Spangled Drongos, White-throated Honeyeaters, Lewins Honeyeaters, the odd Rufous Fantail, Brown Honeyeaters, Bar-shouldered Doves, Scarlet Honeyeaters, and Noisy and Little Friarbirds. Common birds were Rainbow Birds (near the sand blow), Rufous Whistlers, Eastern Spinebills, Brown Thornbills, Grey Fantails, Silvereyes and White-browed Scrubwrens.

The rainforest is not to be missed. It is quite similar to the Fraser Island rainforest. There are more palms and less ferns than in the mountain rain forests.

Common birds of the rainforest are grey fantails, Yellow Robins, Brown Thornbills and Silvereyes. But others that we saw included Pale Yellow Robins (common), Pittas, Little Shrike-thrushes, Topknot, Wompoo, Brown and Emerald Pigeons, Whipbirds, Catbirds, Figbirds, and Large-billed Scrub-wrens. The walk to Freshwater Lake is a must for forest lovers.



At Freshwater Lake, a Sea eagle and a Whistling Kite wheeled around while we ate our lunch.

Rainbow Beach is a great place to stay. The Sea Eagles and Brahminy Kites cruise up and down the beach while many smaller birds fly around in the scrub and open forest and the Gull-billed Terns swoop and dive at fishermen's catches, and Whistling Kites wheel around on the bay. And the Dingo stands on the beach, amongst the people. Along with the Dron-gos, the Dingo is living with the people here. Nature hasn't been forced out.

Simon Kennedy

BELL'S SWAMP BIRD LIST

The list was made by Philip West on 24/11/91, on a fine sunny morning between 10.15 and 11.15 a.m. Water was present on isolated ponds only.

Great cormorant	Galah	Grey shrike-thrush
Little pied cormorant	Little corella	Superb fairy-wren
Yellow-billed spoonbill	Long-billed corella	Black-faced cuckoo-shrike
White-faced heron	Red-rumped parrot	Brown treecreeper
Sacred ibis	Eastern rosella	Red wattlebird
Straw-necked ibis	Kookaburra	White-plumed honeyeater
Australian shoveller	Sacred kingfisher	Starling
Black-tailed native-hen	Fairy martin	Magpie lark
Dusky moorhen	Welcome swallow	Magpie
Masked lapwing	Willie wagtail	Australian raven
Marsh harrier	Rufous songlark	

NATIVE ANIMALS AND THE ROAD TOLL

While riding my bike around the district lately I have become more aware of the number of wallabies and kangaroos which have been killed by the roadside. One usually becomes aware of their presence by the smell as one cycles along and I am sure that many of them would not be easily seen from a car, so the average motorist would not be aware of the large number of collisions with these animals which have occurred in this area. One also becomes aware of the large number of young magpies on our roadsides. As indicated by the grey feathers, most of the casualties are very young birds which would not yet have developed much road sense. It seems a pity that they should be added to the list of victims of our desire for speed.

G. Broadway.

NOTES FOR NOVEMBER

SPARROWS were seen nesting in one of the light fittings at the corner of Lyttleton Street and Barker Street. (EP)

CUT-LEAF GOODENIA or *Goodenia pinnatifida* has been in flower at Sandon (SS)

CUP MOTHS. Cup moths are the most abundant seen in the district (RM). They have been plentiful in many locations such as Vaughan, Castlemaine North, the forest near ETTY Street and in the Muckleford Forest. (KM, RM, EP)

HORSEFIELD BRONZE CUCKOOS have been seen feeding on cup moth larvae. The cuckoos have been abundant this year - perhaps they have been attracted by the cup moths. One was calling for some days before leaving. A week later a brown thornbill was seen feeding a young cuckoo. (KT & GB)

OVAL GRUBS. A sample piece of wood was displayed. It had oval grub holes. What was the cause of this? (FB)

NEST FROM BANKSIA ROSE was displayed at Oct. meeting. It was thought to be a Blackbird's nest. (MO)

PAINTED HONEYEATER is no longer nesting at Fryerstown. Possibly the nest was dislodged from the sapling in a heavy wind. The birds is still heard calling in the district. (CN)

RAINBOW BEE-EATERS and **FAIRY MARTINS** are nesting at North Harcourt in the side of an erosion bank. (IP). A flock of 50 bee-eaters was seen for the day at Fryerstown. (CN)

BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE has been seen in a Castlemaine N Yard. (RM)

KOALA in a healthy condition was seen just off Captain's Gully Road in the Strathlea Forest (EG)

WHITE-THROATED GERYGONE has been observed at Sandon. A very tuneful bird, living up to it's nickname of "bush canary". (SS)

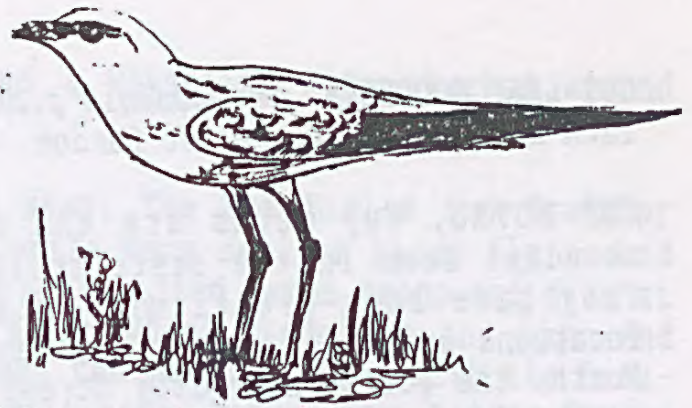
GREY CURRAWONG'S NEST has been located at Sandon. "...baby being unwise enough to call out for food just as I was passing. Its mother wasn't long in coming back with a worm." (SS)

TIGER ORCHIDS have been seen in flower at Sandon. (SS)



AUSTRALIAN PRATINCOLES AT MOOLORT

A dozen were observed for two days on the Moolort Plains by members of the Maryborough F.N.C. Possibly they have come south because of the drought in northern Australia.



KOALA was observed in the Muckleford Forest. (GB)

OTHER BIRD OBSERVATIONS. include

Cockatiels - 3 at Tullaroop

Brown Falcons - 3 pair at Guildford

Black-chinned honeyeaters - half dozen at red, White and Blue Mine

SANDON BIRDS FOR OCTOBER

Birds seen drinking at the bird bath include

Grey Fantail

Wrens

Silvereyes

Magpie

Spotted pardalotes

Speckled warbler (pair)

Thornbills - brown, striated & buff-rumped

Honeyeaters - brown-headed, yellow-faced

Seen on the property

Australasian grebe (pair)

Pacific black duck (pair)

Masked lapwings

Galaha

Eastern rosellas

Fantailed cuckoo

Southern Boobook owl (heard)

Kookaburra

Welcome swallow (pair)

Hooded robins (pair)

Jacky winter (pair)

Rufous whistler (pairs)

White-throated gerygone

Varied sittellas

Red wattlebirds (pair)

Striated pardalotes (pair)

White-winged choughs

Australian raven

White-faced heron

Brown falcon

Sulphur-crested cockatoos

Crimson rosellas

Pallid cuckoo (immatures and adults)

Horsefield's bronze-cuckoo (pair)

Shining bronze-cuckoo (heard)

Sacred kingfisher ?

Richard's pipit (pair)

Bl'k-faced cuckoo-shrike (flock of 7 & 2s)

Crested shrike-tit

Grey shrike-thrush (pair)

Thornbills - yellow-rumped

White-throated treecreepers (pair)

Honeyeaters - yellow tufted and fuscous

Diamond firetail

Olive-backed oriole (pair)

Grey Currawong (pair nesting)

S. Starr

BIRDS SEEN AT TULLAROOP

‡This list by Rita Mills gives the birds seen with the CHIRP walking group at Tullaroop on 27/11/91.

Australasian grebe	Galahs	Yellow-rumped thornbill
Hoary-headed grebe	Cockatiel	Red wattlebirds
Black cormorants	Masked lapwings	White-plumed honeyeater
Intermediate egret	Black-f cuckoo-shrike	Dusky woodswallows
White-faced heron	Tree martins	Mudlark
Pacific heron	Grey shrike-thrush	Magpie
Black swans	Willy wagtail	Little raven
Musk ducks	Grey fantail	
Australian shelducks	Blue wrens	

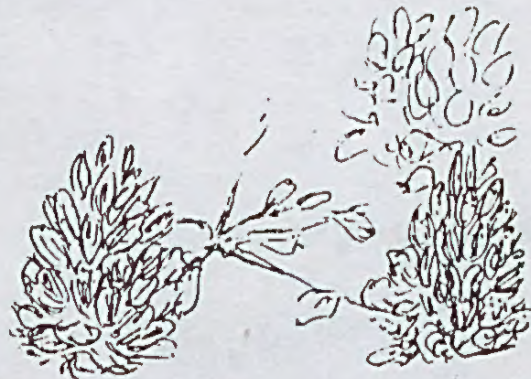
Birds seen on the trip but not at Tullaroop were

Brown falcon	Australian Kestrel	Yellow-billed spoonbills
Silver gulls	Pelicans	Little pied cormorant
Reed warbler	Sparrows	Coots
Red-rumped parrots		

PUSSYTAILS AT CHEWTON

A significant addition to the Club's plant list has been made with the addition of pussytails, or *Ptilotus spathulata*. It was found growing at Chewton, on gravelly grassland, by Ian Higgins.

Pussy tails is in the Amaranth family. It is a prostrate mat-plant. It usually has several flowering stems. In flower, the spike is held erect.



Perhaps it is more widespread than the Club's records indicate. Apparently it flowers towards then end of November, when most of the other wildflowers have finished for the season.

Other interesting plants in the vicinity were *Danthonia carphoides*, *Danthonia auriculata*, *Convolvulus erubescens* and *Glycine tabacina*..

This is the second record for the glycine. It is a blue-flowered pea with clover-like leaves.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Fri 13 Dec. MEMBERS & VISITORS NIGHT. Program provided by members. Bring a plate. High School at 8.00 p.m.

Thurs 19 Dec. OAK FOREST, HARCOURT.. Leave 38 Campbell Street at 6 am sharp, or meet along the way. Take your breakfast and binoculars.

Sat 14 Dec. TARADALE. Taradale bushland and/or The Cascades. 1.30 sharp at SEC, Mostyn St. Bring afternoon tea. If warm, bring your tea also.

Thurs 23 Jan. BUSINESS MEETING. 38 Campbell St at 7.30 p.m.

Fri 14 Feb. TWO ASPECTS OF VICTORIA. Walking in the Glenelg River district with Beris Perry and George Broadway, and the Bogong High Plains with Chris Norwood. 8.00 pm at the high school. This is the annual meeting.

Mar 6-9. THE BASIN CAMPOUT. Labour Day weekend, 1992, hosted by Field Nat Club of Victoria. Held at The Basin Youth and Convention Centre. Excursions to National Herbarium, Botanic gardens, Westgate wetlands, Dandenongs (geology and botany), Chandler's Hill, MMBW farm at Werribee, Doongalla Forest and Studley Park. Cost \$80 (full accommodation). Details from E. Perkins. Booking closes 7 February.

Fri 13 Mar. To be arranged.

Fri 10 April. MISTLETOES. Talk by Malcolm Calder.

Sat 11 April. MISTLETOE EXCURSION. Excursion to Gaash Road. 1.30 pm.

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 38 Campbell St at 7.30 p.m. All members are invited to attend. Visitors are invited to attend the Club's sessions.

SUPPER: Dec 13: E Duffin & B Maund

COMMITTEE: Ern Perkins (Pres), Chris Norwood (VP), Rita Mills (Newsletter), Maggie Oliver (VP), Barbara Maund (Sec), Kaye Turner, Enid Hall, Beris Perry, Clodagh Norwood (Treas), George Broadway, Brenda Envall.