

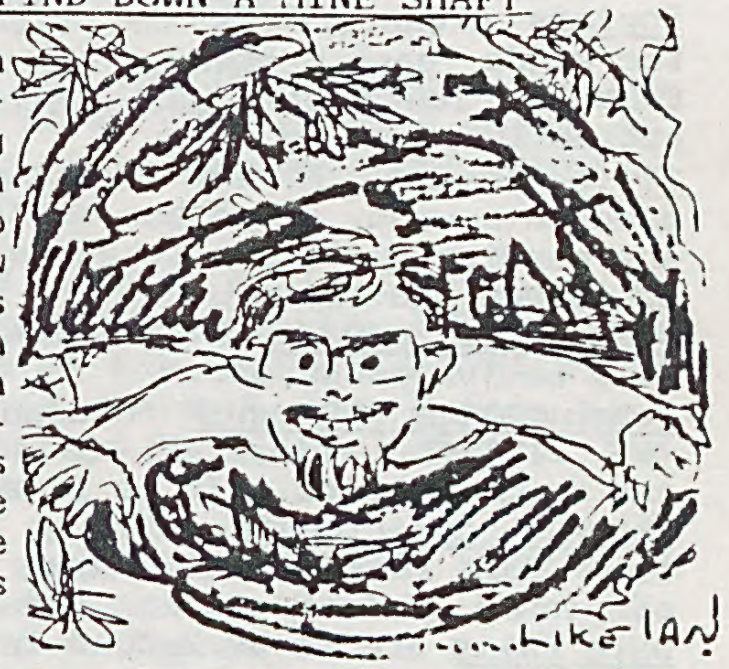
CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST JULY 27

Vol. 12.6 # 125

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Box 324, Castlemaine.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU'LL FIND DOWN A MINE SHAFT

Most people walking through our mine shaft studded countryside are aware that keeping their eyes open will avoid a sudden unwelcome descent into the bowels of the earth. Now it seems that these reminders of environmental destruction 1850's style are not only a hazard to fossicking Field Naturalists and nocturnal orienteers but, paradoxically may be the only remaining refuges for some of our rarer plants in this area.



Recently the Shiny Shield Fern, *Lastreopsis acuminata* was found for the first time in a shaft in basalt near Vaughn Springs. Rather than being very rare it may be that this plant is common in mine shafts as it was later found in two more shafts in basalt at Shicers Gully near Guildford. Also found at Shicers Gully was the "common" Raspfern, *Doodia media*, which had been recorded once previously from Campbell's Creek, growing in - you guessed it - a mine shaft. The more common Blanket and Necklace ferns also seem to find mine shafts a desirable home.

At times in the past there have been moves to fill in the shafts because of their danger. Perhaps we now need to consider some mine shafts as restricted habitat that should be preserved.

So, keeping your eyes on the ground should not only preserve you from a perilous plunge into the profundity of the pit, but, who knows?, you may find something interesting growing there. (If you do, let others know.)

Ian Higgins.

INTERESTING SNIPPETS OF INFORMATION

These are a few things learned from Joan Law-Smith's book on the Royal Botanical Gardens, Melbourne, about trees in the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens. Numbers refer to the numbers placed above head height on the north side of the trees in the Gardens. A complete list is available from the Club.

Quercus macrocarpa (Mossy-cup Oak) (N^os 143, 185) bears acorns over 40mm long.

Casuarina (N^o 304) generic name is an allusion to the long drooping branches looking a little like the feathers of the Cassowary (*Casuarinus*). There are 30 members of the family, mostly native to Australia.

Podocarpus elatus (N^os 23, 279, 356) is a native of N.S.W. and Queensland rainforest.

Poplars signature is the liveliness of their foliage at the winds least command. the leaves are balanced on stalks that are long, slim and flattened, causing them to quiver attractively.

Tilia (Linden) In the Eighteenth Century Grinling Gibbons used this wood, which has smoothness, fine grain and excellent carving qualities to carve his beautiful representations of leaves and flowers.

Chamaerops humilis (Dwarf Fan Palm) (N^o 390) is the only palm native to Europe.

Trachycarpus fortunei (Chūsān, or Chinese Windmill Palm) (N^o 211) The fibre is used for hanging baskets, ropes and rough fabrics. It is frost resistant.

Phoenix canariensis (Canary Island Date Palm) (N^os 11, 116, 120, 183) 'In the genus Phoenix the basal few pairs of pinnae or leaflets are reduced to evil spines'.

Date Palms are to be found in the Canary Islands

(*P. canariensis*), Egypt (*P. dactylifera*), tropical Africa (*P. reclinata*), India (*P. sylvestris*, the Wild, or Silver Date Palm), Sri Lanka (*P. zeylanica*), Assam (*P. humilis*, Assam Date Palm), from Cochin (China), India, and the Himalayas (*P. rupicola*, from the Latin, meaning cliff dwelling, the Rock Date Palm)

'Long before the dawn of recorded history palms have been a most important family of plants to man. The Tree of Life in the Bible is' - reputedly - 'the Egyptian Date Palm, its culture recorded as early as 3,500 B.C. Its fruits were the principal feed of the people of those countries where it grew, and its great leaves were used as tokens of victory and peace, and are still seen today in many religious ceremonies. This family of plants is of great economic importance and their domestic uses are considerable. Food apart, they furnish many of the needs of tropical man; building materials, woven walls for houses, thatching for roofs, basket making, fibres for ropes, oil, wax, and vegetable ivory, and betel-nut for use as a mild stimulant.

Contributor- Barbara Maund

NOTES FOR JUNE

TULLAROOP SIGHTINGS. The Moolert Corner on the way to Tullaroop reservoir continues to be an productive birding locality. K. Turner and party recently saw here

White-fronted Chats - too numerous to count

Skylarks

Singing Bushlarks

Golden headed Cisticolas (3)

SWIFT PARROT AT SMITHS REEF. A Swift Parrot was found by Geelong F.N.C. at the excursion during the long weekend. It is similar in appearance to a Lorikeet, but has a much longer, and brown, tail feathers. A Swift Parrot was found at the Red, White and Blue Mine last year, so this is the second sighting in under 12 months.

FAN-TAILED CUCKOOS at EUREKA. During the excursion to the Chimney at Eureka, four Fan-tailed Cuckoos were observed. They were quite tame, and at times, all four could be seen at once through binoculars.

ROSE ROBIN at BOTANIC GARDENS. A Rose Robin was found at the Botanic Gardens by members of the Geelong F.N.C, and was observed by most of those on the excursion held on the Monday morning of the long weekend. Rose Robins have been listed for Eppalock, but this is a new record for the immediate Castlemaine area.

SPOTTED QUAIL THRUSH was another uncommon bird seen during the long weekend with Geelong F.N.C. It was sighted on the Green Gully Road, Glenluce.

TURQOISE PARROT. A parrot, possibly the Turquoise Parrot has been seen near Smiths Reef forest. Turquoise Parrots have previously been reported for the Maldon area, and are probably is still to be found in the district.

PAINTED BUTTON-QUAIL. A flock of four were observed in Muckleford Forest. A group of Kangaroos crossed the road, and while stopped to watch, the Button-quail were noticed at the edge of the Road. Button-quail may be much more numerous than some of the other more frequently observed, and more conspicuous birds.

SHINY SHIELD FERN A Shiny Shield-fern (*Lastreopsis acuminata*) has been located in a mine shaft south of the Loddon River at Vaughan by I. Higgins. It was found in a disused basalt mine shaft. This is a new record for the plant list.

NARROW ROCK-FERN. Rock ferns are common throughout the district, usually growing near rocks and often on dry ridges. The Common Rock-fern (now *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*) has until now, been the only rock-fern recognised. Narrow Rock-fern (*C. nivalis*) was found

during the Club's excursion to Shicer Gully area. It has a much narrower frond, and hairs (not scales) along the leaf stalk.

COMMON RASP-FERN at DONKEY GULLY. I. Higgins has revisited the mine shaft at Donkey Gully, and reports that the Common Rasp-fern (*Doodia media*) is still to be found in the shaft.

TREE-FERN at BARKERS CREEK. Another occurrence of Rough Tree-fern has been visted by I. Higgins. This extends the known range of the fern. It grows at Harcourt North, and was formerly found at Castlemaine North.

SPECKLED THRUSH has been observed at Harcourt North (north of the Oak Forest) by R. Mills.

SILKY DAISY BUSH. About half a dozen bushes of the daisy bush (*Olearia mysinoides*) were seen on during the excursion to Hunters Creek. Isolated specimens have been previously seen near Elphinstone. It is a small shrub with small holly-like leaves and white daisy flowers.

WE RATE THE MINERAL WATERS.

The survey of the local waters, carried out by members of Geelong and Castleamine F.N.C. gave a narrow win to Hepburn Springs. Participants were asked to rate the waters on a scale of 1 to 10, taking Glenluce as the standard of 5.

Where more than one spring is situated at a locality, the best mark was taken. For most springs, the scores ranged from 1 to 9 (or even 0 to 10), so the scoring system favoured those places with more than one spring. If the worst score had been taken, Hepburn wuld have fared much worse.

These were the results

GLENLUCE	5.000	(range 5-5)*
GLENLYON	4.937	(range 1-8)
COLIBAN	not assessed	
LYONVILLE	3.865	(range 2-7)
LEITCH'S CREEK	4.760	(range 0-9)
TIPPERARY	5.146	(range 0-9)
HEPBURN	5.419	(range 0-10)

(* where necessary, reults were computed to make Glenluce score = 5)

A quick survey of voting methods gave some interesting results. Some springs had a taste not unlike tap water, and such waters were given a top rating by some of the survey team, but for others gave a zero mark. It's all a matter of taste!

LONG-WEEKEND BIRD LISTS

Bird lists were made for each of the days during the visit of Geelong F.N.C. on 6/7/8 June, 1987.

MUCKLEFORD and Mt ALEXANDER (Sat 6th June, 1987)

Brown Falcon	Silvereye	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Sparrow	Welcome Swallow	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Swift Parrot	Scarlet Robin	Spotted Pardalote
Grey Thrush	Pied Currawong	Yellow-tailed Thornbill
Magpie	Eastern Rosella	Crimson Rosella
Blue Wren	Aust. Raven	White-winged Chough
Cockatoo	Yellow Robin	Red Wattlebird
Galah	Grey Fantail	Striated Thornbill
Black Swan	Little Grebe	Straw-necked Ibis
Coot	Golden Whistler	Wedge-tailed Eagle
Kookaburra	Grey Currawong	White-eared Honeyeater
Starling	Red-rump Parrot	Little Pied-cormorant
Wood Duck	Red-browed Finch	White-throated Treecreeper
Musk Duck	Masked Lapwing	White-plumed Honeyeater
Mudlark	Noisy Miner	

GLENLUCE-GLENLYON-DAYLESFORD (Sun 7th June, 1987)

Magpie	Red Wattlebird	Wedge-tailed Eagle
Corella	Brown Falcon	Spotted Quail-thrush
Kookaburra	Flame Robin	Buff-tailed Thornbill
Mudlark	Brown Thornbill	Black-shouldered Kite
Galah	Aust. Raven	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Blue Wren	Welcome Swallow	White-winged Chough
Wood Duck	Pied Currawong	White-naped Honeyeater
Black Duck	Red-browed Finch	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Gold Finch	Scarlet Robin	Eastern Spinebill
Starling	Mountain Duck	Spotted Pardalote
Blackbird	Crimson Rosella	Little Pied Cormorant
Silvereye	Yellow Robin	White-browed Scrub-wren
Sparrow	Masked Lapwing	White-throated Treecreeper

CLAY PITS - SPRING GULLY (Mon 8th June)

Silvereye	Grey Currawong	Spotted Pardalote
Magpie	White Cockatoo	White-winged Chough
Kookaburra	Red Wattlebird	Buff-tailed Thornbill
Goldfinch	Pied Currawong	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Rose Robin	Crimson Rosella	Striated Thornbill
Grey Fantail	Grey Thrush	Striated Pardalote
Blue Wren	Fan-tail Cuckoo	Yellow-rump Thornbill
Blackbird	Little Eagle	White-throated Treecreeper
Aust. Raven	Scarlet Robin	White-naped Honeyeater
Sparrow	Sittella	White-eared Honeyeater
Starling		

From the "Midland Express" 23/6/87

GUIDE TO CAMPING

The "Midland Express" (23/6/87) contained an article about a recently released publication by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. It is called "Where to camp in Victoria's Great Outdoors", and lists about 50 defined camping areas (some without facilities) under their management for those who wish to avoid tourist caravan parks.

It is available from the CFL Information Centre, 249 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, phone (03) 651 4795.

FUNGI

This year has been outstanding for the number and variety of fungi seen throughout the bush and particularly in the Pine Plantations. The large red and white spotted Fly Agaric has been very prolific, as have the Saffron Milk Caps (yum!). There have been thousands of them under the pines at the Moonlight Flat plantation. A velvety grey/mauve one was also very numerous, but much harder to spot. It seems to also be symbiotic with the pines. A couple of species of boletes (tube fungi) were also found, one the kangaroos find quite irresistible. I didn't find one that didn't have their distinctive toothmarks in them.

I am still finding numerous varieties, some very attractive, on my walks through the bush, but I've been lazy, and only admired, and not made any serious attempts to identify them!

Rita Mills

Trees and Dam Evaporation

"The amount of water evaporating from a dam can be significantly reduced by an appropriately placed windbreak. For best results the trees should be about four times their own height from the dam. This is where the maximum shelter is, and it also prevents the roots of the trees taking up the water or damaging the dam wall. A small reduction in wind speed will lead to a large saving of precious moisture.

"... The effectiveness of a windbreak depends on its height, density, and its location. The height should be maximised and the foliage density should be uniform from top to bottom and should be from 30% to 50% open. If it is too dense as often the case with cypress hedges, the sheltered zone is reduced and occurs hard up against the trees."

John Dingate.

Contributed by B. Maund

B.O.C BIRDLIST FOR SANDON

The birds identified by Bird Observer Club members for the the Rise and Shine area, Clydesdale, and for Ebery's Dam, Sandon on Sunday 29th March, 1987 include

Hoary Headed Grebe	Welcome Swallow
Little Grebe	Tree Martin
Great Cormorant	Fairy Martin
Pied (Little) Cormorant	Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike
White-faced Heron	White-bellied Cuckoo Shrike
Ibis	Flame Robin
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Scarlet Robin
Black Swan	Eastern Yellow Robin
Australian Shelduck	Jacky Winter
Black Duck	Crested Shrike-tit
Hardhead	Golden Whistler
Maned Duck	Grey Shrike-thrush
Black-shouldered Kite	Restless Flycatcher
Brown Goshawk	Grey Fantail
Little Eagle	Willy Wagtail
Brown Falcon	Superb Fairy Wren
Coot	Speckled Warbler
Masked Lapwing	Weebill
Black-fronted Plover	Brown Thornbill
Feral Pigeon	Buff-rumped Thornbill
Common Bronzewing	Striated Thornbill
Sulphur-crest.Cockatoo	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Galah	Varied Sittella
Musk Lorikeet	White-throated Treecreeper
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Brown Treecreeper
Little Lorikeet	Red Wattle Bird
Crimson Rosella	Noisy Miner
Eastern Rosella	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Red-rumped Parrot	Fuscous Honeyeater
Horsefield's Bronze	White-plumed Honeyeater
Cuckoo	New Holland Honeyeater
Owlet Nightjar	Black-chinned Honeyeater
Australian Raven	Brown-headed Honeyeater
Magpie	Spotted Pardalote
Magpie Lark	Striated Pardalote
Dusky Woodswallow	Goldfinch
White-winged Chough	House Sparrow
Diamond Firetail	Starling

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

COMMITTEE Ern Perkins(Pres), Barbara Maund(Sec), Geoff Sitch(Treas), Maggie Oliver(Vice Pres), Kaye Turner(Exc,Sec), George Broadway(Libr), Rita Mills(Newsletter), Gunter Liebl, Margaret Dunne, Elma Kelly, Jack Dare (I/P Pres), Berri Perry, Robyn Holden, George Evans.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Excursions leave promptly at the times shown. Date, time and locality of the excursion may be changed at the monthly meetings; if not at the meeting check with a committee member.

Monthly meetings at the High School at 8.00 p.m.

Wed 8 July FRAZER CAVES, TASMANIA. We have been invited by Bendigo F.N.C. to hear Prof. Jim Allen, Profesor of Archeology at Latrobe University, who will speak about his visit to Frazer Caves, Tasmania. Meeting at Dept of Agriculture, Epsom, at 7.30 p.m.

Frid 10 July. EUROPE and AMERICA with Mr G. Barry.

Sat 11 July MOONLIGHT FLAT PINE PLANTATION. A walk through the Barkers Creek/Moonlight Flat Pine plantation, led by Rita Mills. Meet at S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30 p.m.

Fri 14 Aug SIMPSON DESERT with David Plant

Sat 15 Aug WELSHMANS REEF/CAIRN CURRAN. Birding in the Seers Road area, led by K. Turner. Meet S.E.C, Mostyn St at 1.30

Fri 28 Aug-Sun 30 Aug LITTLE DESERT LODGE. August Campout of W.V.F.N.C.A. Book directly with Little Desert Lodge, Winiam, 053 915 232. Twin Room share \$28.50 per person per day; motel type \$35.00. 30 powered sites.

Sat 3 Oct. BRISBANE RANGES. All day excursion. Bring lunch, and possibly tea too. Leave S.E.C. Mostyn St, at 8.30 a.m.

Frid 9 Oct. CHINA with John Zwar.

Frid 9 - Sun 11 Oct. St ARNAUD CAMPOUT of W.V.F.N.C.A.

Frid 16 - Sun 18 Oct. RUSHWORTH CAMPOUT. Springtime get together of V.F.N.C.A. at Rushworth. Accomodation at Waranga Holiday Camp (camp building with bunks) or overnight vans. For bunks or meals book with Marie Allender (19 Hawthorn Av, Caufield North 3161, 03 527 2749). For camp sites and vans book direct with Mr & Mrs Houghton (Waranga Holiday Camp, Tatura Rd, Rushworth, 058 66 1243). The campout will start with slides and social evening on Friday. There will be a Saturday excursion and a half-day Sunday excursion.

Sun 18 Oct MUCKLEFORD FOREST with Bendigo F.N.C. Meet Market Car Park at 10.00 a.m. Bring your lunch.