

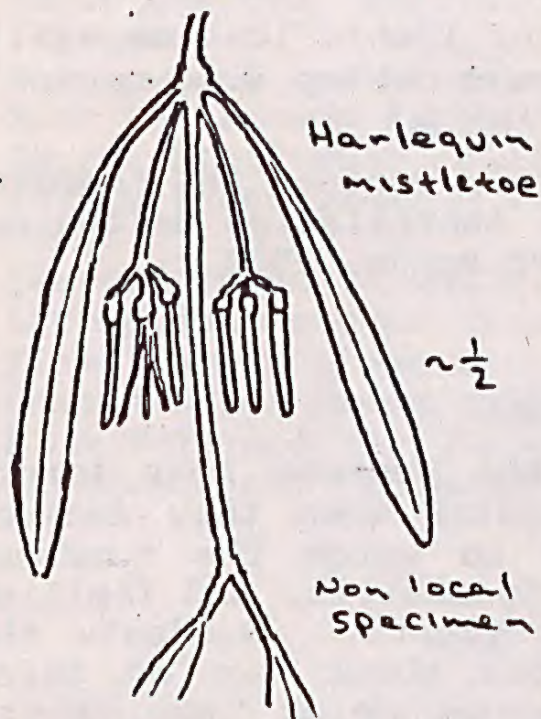
CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

DECEMBER '87 #130



HARLEQUIN MISTLETOES AT MALDON

Harlequin Mistletoe was seen growing at Maldon during the excursion to Dr. Champion's property during the Club's excursion on August 25th. This is the first record of the mistletoe in the district, and is thus a new addition to the plant list.



Harlequin mistletoe has narrow, but flattened leaves less than a centimetre wide, and so is easy to recognize even when not in flower. This compares with the other local mistletoes. The Wiry mistletoe has cylindrical leaves; the Grey Mistletoe has broad grey leaves about 2 cm wide, and the others have long green drooping leaves that are at least a centimetre wide. The leaves are usually in opposite pairs, but sometimes they may be unpaired. The flowers, like those of other mistletoes, are quite attractive. They point upwards, and have a red base and green upper parts.

Harlequin mistletoe is usually to be found on She-oak or Acacia, (as at Maldon), but a number of other plants may be host. I have seen it growing on Weeping Pittosporum at Mitre Rock.

Harlequin Mistletoe has also been seen growing along the Carisbrook - Maldon road by Ian Higgins. It is probably worth looking at local acacias, particularly fern-leaf acacias, for Harlequin Mistletoe. As the seeds would be brought in by Mistletoe birds and the like, it would most likely be found in areas already with mistletoe, particularly where Wiry Mistletoe and Grey Mistletoe are growing - these two are usually found on wattles also.

B.O.P. Watch: Surveying Raptors in Australia.

B.O.P. Watch is a simple vehicle-based bird of prey (bop) counting scheme designed to identify areas of prime importance to different species of raptor, and areas where seasonal or irregular changes in raptor numbers occur in Australia. The Australian continent has been divided into 61 biogeographic zones. As participants drive through these zones they record on score sheets all of the raptors that they see. The distance travelled, time taken and weather variables are also recorded. After checking for errors, score sheets are filed pending computer entry and analysis. In the first eighteen months 250 participants have sent in over 6,500 completed score sheets. The data collection will continue for another four years.

Preliminary analyses have confirmed the decline on southwestern Australia of the otherwise widespread and abundant Whistling Kite, pointed to a greater than anticipated abundance of the uncommon Black-breasted Buzzard in Northern Australia, and highlighted the marked differing in raptor numbers in adjacent zones with differing agricultural practices.

B.O.P. Watch will hone your raptor identification skills and profitably occupy your journeys along the nation's roads.

Anyone wishing to participate should contact the coordinator, Dr. David Baker-Crabb, Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, 21 Gladstone St., Moonee Ponds, 3039.

BROLGAS AT BEEAC

A local family, who had spent the weekend near Lorne, were on their way home to Castlemaine when they decided to stop at the lakes near Beeac to watch the numerous waterfowl. There were numbers of Spoonbills, and families of Swans, some with quite large cygnets. Suddenly the daughter spotted a pair of Brolgas about two or three hundred metres off with a half grown chick leaping and prancing around them. Daughter thought it was a great opportunity for a photo, so put the long range lens on the camera and got out of the car, but once she climbed through the fence the family started to move away, much too wary to let her approach to within range to get a decent photograph.

October/November Notes, Barkers Creek

Twining Fringe-lily, Wax-lip Orchids, Hypericum and Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea flowering.

Wood-white and Australian Painted-lady Butterflies about.

Greencomb Spider Orchids, Rough Mint-bush Flowering.

Yellow Thorn-bill collecting wool; Striated Thorn-bills

feeding young, in nest hanging in foliage of a Yellow-box tree.

Chocolate lilies, scarlet and blue Pimpernels, yellow Scaley-buttons, Buttercups, Daphne-heath, Twining Glycine, Parrot pea, Australian Forget-me-nots, Cranes-bill, Bearded Orchids and Creeping Bossiaea all flowering. Buff-rumped Thorn-bills feeding young, in nest near ground. Tree-creepers feeding young in log-nest.

Flock of Wood Swallows calling and taking insects on the wing.

Young Magpies exercising their wings up on the nest.

Musky Caledonias in flower.

Two young Magpies have left the nest.

Scented, Salmon Sun-orchids, Tall Bluebells, Milkmaids, Flax Lily, Grass Trigger-plant, Golden, Clustered and grey Everlastings out in flower.

Young Buff-tailed and Striated Thorn-bills now flying.

A stream of migratory Caper-white Butterflies passing through in S.W. direction. Also, (one only), rare White Spot Skipper butterfly on Marguarite flower.

Several angry Magpies harassing a brown hawk, brought it to the ground at one stage.

Cup-moth larvae falling from Eucalypts to pupate elsewhere.

Newly emerged 'Spitfire' larvae (Sawfly larvae), on eucalypt foliage.

Three young tree-creepers left the log-nest

Spur Vellia and Kangaroo Grass flowering, also Onion Orchids.

Sacred Kingfisher calling.

Yellow-faced Honeyeater collecting wool, also red Wattle-bird.

Bearded Dragon - new visitor to our block.

Late Black Wattles flowering.

First Common Brown Butterflies of season seen.

Dragon-flies emerging.

Blue Herons-bill, Magenta Pelargonium and Brunonias (Blue Pin-cushions) flowering.

Wyn Palmer.

A PUZZLE OF WORMS

Last week I got around to removing the all-pervading green algae from our small plastic lily-pond. Using a rake I dredged it up from the bottom, along with miscellaneous wild life - tadpoles, mosquito wrigglers, the odd beetle, and most surprisingly, earthworms. Not just one, but a whole collection of them!

The 'original' worms, presumably, would have been in the soil used, in a plastic bag, to plant the waterlily. They appear to have bred, and colonised the algae, as the worms ranged in size from very small to full 'garden' sized - at least two dozen of them - all alive and well.

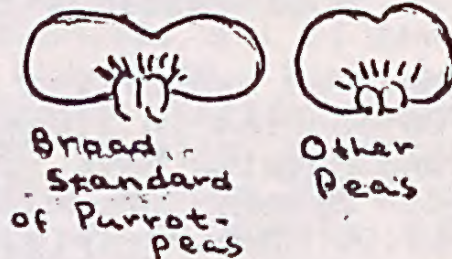
Why didn't they drown?

Wyn Palmer

THE PARROT PEAS

The red/orange/yellow/brown coloured peas are called 'egg and bacon'. There are well over a dozen kinds of these in the Castlemaine district. These include Bush-peas, Bitter-peas, Flat-peas and Parrot-peas.

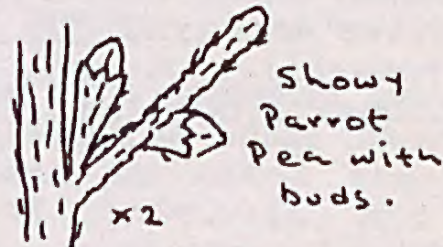
One of the easiest groups to recognize is the Parrot-pea; its flower is almost twice as wide as it is deep. Parrot peas grow to a small shrub and the leaves are wire-like.



This key distinguishes between the kinds.

- Leaves spirally twisted Twisted Parrot-pea
- Leaves not twisted
 - Branches often ending in spines .. Bushy Parrot-pea
 - Branches not ending in spines
 - Flowers on short stalks or stalkless
 - Leaves finely warty, flowers in pairs and stalkless at leaf bases .. Showy Parrot-pea
 - Leaves not warty and curved, flowers in small almost stalkless sprays . Grey Parrot-pea
 - Flowers long stalked
 - Red & yellow flowers; hairless . Heath Parrot-pea
 - Dark red flowers; hairy Red Parrot-pea

SHOWY PARROT-PEA (*Dillwynia sericea*) is the commonest of the Parrot-peas. Its leaves are finely warty and the leaves and branches are finely hairy. The flower bases are also hairy, and the flowers are almost stalkless and usually in pairs at the base of the leaves. The flowers may be very crowded so that the group of flowers may look rather like a bottle-brush. Showy Parrot-pea may be found in any of the local forests.

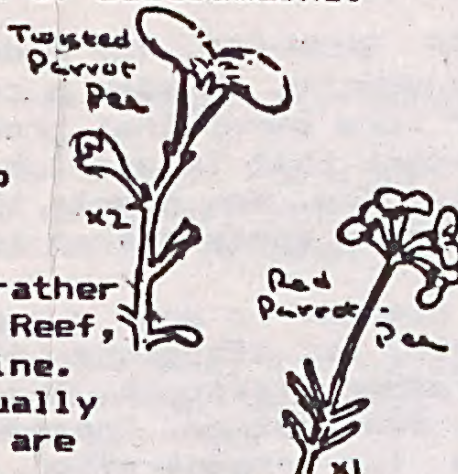


GREY PARROT-PEA (*D. cinerescens*) is very similar in general appearance to Showy Parrot-pea. However the leaves are finer, not warty, and more spreading, with the leaves curved back slightly. The flowers are in small bunches (often only 2 or 3 flowers in the bunch) They are often towards the ends of the branches. Grey Parrot-pea is quite common, and is sometimes found growing with Showy Parrot-pea.



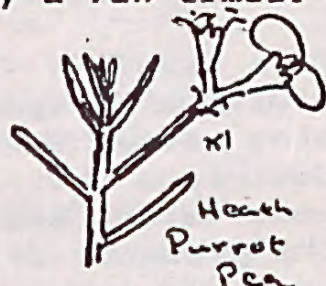
TWIGTED PARROT-PEA (*D. retorta*) occurs in Smiths Reef Forest, and in the forests south of Castlemaine.

The leaves are quite short and the flowers are shortly stalked usually towards the ends of the branches. However, the spirally twisted leaves make this easy to recognize.



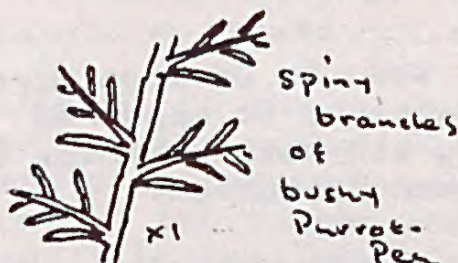
RED PARROT-PEA (*D. hispida*) is rather uncommon. It is found in Smiths Reef, particularly near the railway line. The leaves are rather short (usually under 1 cm) and the red flowers are on long stalks, often above the branches. The leaves and branches are finely hairy.

HEATH PARROT-PEA is rare in this district. I have seen it only a few times. Like Red Parrot pea, the flowers



are on long stalks, but the leaves and branches are quite smooth. The leaves are usually over a centimetre long, and the flowers are the usual yellow-orange red egg and bacon colour.

BUSHY PARROT-PEA (*D. ramosissima*) Often the branches end in spines, so this pea is rather easy to recognise.



The flowers grow singly at the base of the upper leaves. The leaves are sometimes curved inwards. It is moderately common, particularly near Glenluce.

All of these Parrot-peas flower in Spring.

A few other Egg and Bacon plants have wire-like leaves. The Lax-flowered bush-pea is one of these that occurs near Castlemaine. However, its flowers are not broad like those of a Parrot-pea, and there are numerous dark brown papery floral leaves (called bracts) behind its flower. Eutaxia also has very narrow leaves. It too can be distinguished by the flower shape, and by the leaves which grow in opposite pairs.

Highlight of a recent C.H.I.R.P. Walking Group walk in the Oak Forest at Harcourt was the sight of a very handsome young male koala sitting only a little above head height in a rather scrawny Manna Gum, giving us all an excellent view.

NOTES FOR NOVEMBER

FLAT-LEAF BUSH-PEA. The Wednesday evening excursion on Nov 16th was to Nuggetty, to make a count of the Flat-leaf Bush-Pea. It is a rather rare shrub that grows on granite outcrops, and there has been concern that it might be on the verge of extinction in this district. The few plants that exist typically grow from rock cracks, or in spots rather inaccessible to grazing animals.

It was planned to make a map to show the location and height of the plants, but altogether 125 plants were located, to make map-making rather difficult. The heights ranged from a metre or more to a few centimetres. Apparently the seasons just past have been suitable for regeneration. It will be interesting to see the count for next year, and to see if the new plants can survive summer and grazing pressure when grass is scarce.

A few years ago, the Bush-pea was growing near the car park, but died off during the drought. It is good to see that at least six plants have regenerated here also.

BRONZEWING IN THE CITY. There were several reports of a Bronzewing Pigeon in the town. One sighting was at the corner of Fletcher St and Doveton St, with pedestrians being able to approach to a couple of metres. It has also been visiting backyards, and seems unconcerned about the presence of people.

BIRDS EGG ON DISPLAY. A birds egg was displayed at the meeting. It was 4 cm long, and of a pale brown colour with numerous dark brown spots.

BUDGERIGAR SIGHTING. A Budgerigar was seen in Doveton Street on Nov 22nd. It may have been an aviary escape; it appeared to be rather tame. It was feeding along the grass nature strips in the street, and flew onto a nearby fence when disturbed.

KANGAROOS. B Perry reported on the Kangaroo being reared. On being released, it returned next day with a companion.

CASTLEMAINE PLANT LIST #5 is now ready for printing. It lists 99 families for the district, with 808 species, of which 263 are exotic. There are 7220 locality records.

THE PARASITIC FLY. In last months notes, mention was made of a parasitic fly. Mrs Palmer writes

"I am in no doubt that it is a parasite - in this case on an Emperor Gum Moth larva. I enclose a slide which shows the thread-like eggs quite clearly. We tried to scrape them off but they stuck fast.

I kept the caterpillar in a box, complete with lid pierced with holes. It was past the eating stage and given dry leaves and bits of bark etc, it lost no time in covering itself, sticking bits and pieces together all over it.

Roughly two weeks later, on removing the lid we were greeted by a crowd of grey, near blowfly sized flies. They were more streamlined than actual blowflies.

We pulled the case apart and there was no sign of larva or pupa"

A very interesting observation. Can anyone identify the flies from the description? They would certainly not be the usual parasitic fly, the Ichneumon Fly, which is related to the wasps, and has the wasp waist.

EAGLE IN WATER. On one of the very hot days in October school holidays, a Wedge-tailed Eagle was observed standing in water, with its body part submerged for some minutes.

CASTLEMAINE STREET TREES. The booklet listing Castlemaine's street trees has now been prepared. In it, these have been identified, and sample locations given.

Eucalypts	27 species	Prunus	4 species
Wattles	17 species	Autumn foliage trees	16
Melaleucas	6 species	Other deciduous shrubs	2
Other native trees	9 species	Other deciduous trees	11
Other native shrubs	10 species	Other evergreen shrubs	15
Pines and cypress	4 species	Other evergreen trees	6

JUVENILE ORIOLE was seen on the excursion to Taradale cemetery on Nov 14th. It remained in clear view for some time. This is a new locality record for the bird list.

LANKY BUTTONS is one of the rare plants of the district. Last year, it was discovered in the Smiths Reef forest. During the cup day excursion it was noticed in several new areas of Kalimna.

WILDFLOWERS OF THE GOLDFIELDS. The Club is preparing a booklet describing the common plants of the Castlemaine goldfield forests and printing is expected during December. It has brief descriptions of the larger and common plants, but at this stage does not have illustrations. Perhaps some of the artist members of the Club could consider making drawings of the species described, so that these could be included in a later version of the booklet.

DUCK ORCHID AND TIGER ORCHIDS AT GLENLUCE. Many of the those at the excursion on Nov 14th returned home via Glenluce. Both Duck Orchid and Tiger Orchid have flowered at Glenluce this year.

BLOWN GRASS AT TARADALE. A sample of Blown Grass (otherwise known as *Agrostis aemula*) was found at the Taradale cemetery, also during the excursion in November. This is the first record for this grass in the Club's plant list.

WANDERING BLUETONGUE. A Bluetongue Lizard has been noticed walking around a house block in Campbell St. Usually rather sedentary, this animal was seen to be undertaking a considerable amount of exercise.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Excursions leave promptly at the times shown. Date, time and location of the excursions may be changed at the monthly meetings.

Monthly meetings at the High School at 8 p.m.

Fri 11 Dec MEMBERS and VISITORS NIGHT. Bring some slides or specimens, or experiences. And a plate for supper if possible. 8 p.m. at the High School.

Sat 12 Dec. THE OAK FOREST. An excursion to the Oak Forest at Harcourt. Bring your binoculars and bird book. You may wish to stay for tea. Leader is Rita Mills. Meet S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30 p.m. sharp.

Sun 13 Dec. Official opening of Environment Centre, 247 Flinders St., Melbourne at 12.00 noon. Details can be obtained from the Secretary.

Thurs 28 Jan. Business meeting, 7.30 at 38 Campbell St.

Fri 12 Feb. ANNUAL MEETING. 8.00 p.m. at the High School.

Frid 18 - Sun 20 March. WARRNAMBOOL. Western Victoria Field Naturalists Clubs Association Campout.

Fri - Afternoon for early arrivals - points of interest Port Fairy
- Evening - Mutton Bird colony, Griffiths Island, Port Fairy.

Sat - Morning - beach walks to observe waders
- Afternoon - explore Tower Hill volcanic area
- Evening - General meeting of W.V.F.N.C.A., and guest speaker

Sun - Morning - coastal erosion/scenery east of Warrnambool
- Ralph Illidge Bush Sanctuary
- barbecue lunch

Sat 1 Oct. BICENTENARY WALK THROUGH KALIMNA
2.00 pm; meet outside high school (Lawson Pde)

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Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club inc., P.O. Box 324

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Some notable observations made by Club members

Sharp-tailed Sandpipers at Lake Cooper 26/11/87

Pied Bitts at Lake Cooper 26/11/87

Turquoise Parrots, Warby Ranges on 26/11/87