



# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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## SNOW GUMS IN THE SNOW

Monday 31st August was the last official day of winter, and the weather was particularly cold.

I was driving along Pollards Road (it starts at the Calder Highway, and leads to the Elphinstone - Sutton Grange road), when snow began to fall. I stopped to watch the snow fall, and noticed the long juvenile leaves of Snow Gums along the side of the road.

It is always exciting to find a new plant for the district, and particularly a new eucalypt, and even more so to find a Snow gum in the snow!



Snow gums are associated with high altitudes. However, snow-gums can be found scattered though Victoria, and some can even be found almost at sea level at Frankston. I have seen them growing along the Karlsruhe-Lancefield road, at Ballarat, at Alexandra, and along the Maroondah Highway near Healesville, so it is not particularly surprising to find them at Elphinstone.

At Elphinstone, the Snow gums are growing with Candlebark. These two gums have a similar appearance, but the size and shape of the juvenile leaves is quite different. The young leaves of Candlebark are round and bluish and grow in opposite, stalkless pairs. The snow gum leaves are stalked, and much longer than wide, and are a dull green color. The veins of the Snow gum leaves are very distinctive, being almost parallel to the main vein.



The scientific name of Snow gum is *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, which means "few flowered". It seems to be a rather unsuitable name, as Snow gums often flower quite profusely. The buds and fruit of Snow gum is rather like those of a Peppermint, but are larger.

Snow gums can be found along Pollards road; along the Metcalfe-Elphinstone road, and also Potts Road (leading from Elphinstone to Taradale)

### Barkers Creek Notes

August/September

Brown treecreeper - new for Barkers Creek bird list.

Golden Moth orchids in flower.

Magpies nest-building, near the top of a tree.

Honey-pots flowering.

Yellow-faced and Brown-headed Honeyeaters collecting wool.

Austral Bear's ears and "Eggs and Bacon" flowering.

Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Scarlet Robin hen collecting wool.

Silver and Ploughshare Wattles flowering.

Pallid Cuckoo and Olive-backed Oriole calling.

White Marianth, Early Nancy and Tiny Star flowering, also Pink Bells.

Pair of Wallabies, one with a Joey in her pouch.

Tall Sundew, Riceflower, Austral Indigo and Gold-dust Wattle flowering.

Pink-fingers, Blue Caledenia and Leopard Orchids in flower.

Rainbow Bee-eaters back.

Running Postman and Candles coming into flower, also Yam Daisies.

Wyn Palmer.

Coming home from the West this time it seems that the East has the greater show of flowers, as it has been very dry in the West this year. The things that have most impressed me in my first week home have been masses of Pink Bells and Dotted Sunorchids near home, and the Grevilleas - Golden; a small form of pink flowered Rosemary Grevillea and a hybrid between the two; and the lovely holly-leaved Brisbane Ranges Grevillea - seen on the excursion last Saturday (Sat Oct. 3)

Ru.



## A TRIP ALONG THE MURRAY VALLEY

Usually when traveling along the Murray Valley Highway there is a destination to be reached, and so little time for wandering, or stopping to look. This time we had no destination, or timetable to keep to. The trip was towards the end of September.

MARONG-SERPENTINE RD. A patch of Mystery Wattle (*Acacia difformis*) is along the roadside, about 11 km north of Marong. It is a very distinctive wattle once you become familiar with it.

MT TERRICK TERRICK. This is a lovely area, and we decided to include it in our itinerary, reaching it this time from the Serpentine road. The northern part of the road has large numbers of Billy Buttons - it should be a wonderful sight later on in spring. This time we visited the central granite hill. Mallee Ringnecks, Whiteface, Dusky Woodswallows and White-browed Babblers were all to be seen. The northern part is closed off to cars, which is disappointing as some of this area is a Bull Oak forest. In the north-east corner is a Bull Oak with Bull Oak Mistletoe, which in its turn is host to Harlequin Mistletoe!

SYLVATERRE - COHUNA RD. Red Capped Dotterel were feeding in salt depression.

BRANDY LAKE (Kerang- Quambatook rd). Only Galahs were to be found on this lake. A poor start!

LAKE ELIZABETH was more interesting, with large numbers of Swans, Pelicans and Hoary-headed Grebe. Red-capped Dotterel at the edge. Just past the lake a White-breasted Woodswallow was perched on a dead tree branch. It is very distinctive, with a dark grey head and back, and white under-parts, and with the white and dark clearly divided (rather like a wagtail).

REEDY LAKE. This is the first of the three lakes along the highway just past Kerang. At the Apex Park, several White-breasted Woodswallow were about, sitting and flying in full view! They are a quite beautiful bird. A Clamorous Reed-warbler sitting up on a branch next to the creek bridge. These are very shy birds, and usually keep hidden in reeds, but this one allowed us a good look before flying into cover.

MIDDLE LAKE IBIS ROOKERY. A hide has been built to allow an elevated view of the lake. It is quite marvellous, with thousands of Straw-neck Ibis and Sacred Ibis, flying in and out, and circling, and roosting. It would be quite impossible to count them all. Clamorous Reed-



warblers were active just below the hide. We could see them very well, coming into view, and flitting back to cover, and being very clamorous. Fish were threshing about in the shallows, with Pelicans feeding in the disturbance. A Darter was drying itself very close to the hide. At one stage we were able to watch a snake swimming through the water. White-breasted Woodswallows were again in clear view. Altogether, 23 different species were listed for the rookery. Last time we came, hawks were very much in evidence. This time Brown Falcons and a Little Eagle were the only two seen.

LAKE CHARM. Caspian Terns were in shallows at western edge of the lake. They are easy to recognize - they are larger than the usual tern, and have large orange bills.

MYSTIC PARK-LAKE BOGA. Hundreds of Banded Stilts and Whiskered Terns were along the swamps to be found at the edge of the highway.

NYAH FOREST. The most conspicuous bird along the Red-gum forests of the Murray were Noisy Miners. They were very numerous and aggressive, and seemed to chase off most other birds (except the Starlings). Magpies and Ravens get a rough time from them. We saw Grey-crowned Babblers in several spots, and watched a Miner try to frighten off a small flock of these. It didn't succeed so a flock of Miners flew in to help. The Babblers sheltered under a tree branch until the Miners gave up. Starlings seem to be common and widespread in the northern part of Victoria; at several stops we were able to watch Starlings entering hollows in the Red Gums, with food, and carrying off droppings. Pied Butcherbirds were seen at several spots along the Murray, and were were able to listen to them calling.

WOOD WOOD RESERVE. This is a patch of mallee bushland behind the Wood Wood caravan park. Red Capped Robins were one of the first birds seen here. The male is a handsome bird, with a prominent red cap in addition to the red breast. Other birds that we were able to see several times at least in the reserve were White-winged Trillers, Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, Rufous Whistlers, Pallid Cuckoos, Common Bronzewing, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes, Weebills, Little Friarbirds and Black-faced Honeyeaters.

PIANGIL. On a flooded paddock were Sacred Ibis feeding, in company with a Glossy Ibis and Pied Stilts. Grey-crowned Babblers were also seen, this time in Black Box. Black Box is a handsome tree, and it is very pleasant to drive along roads lined with it.

WAKOOL JUNCTION. A few people had camped here for the night, and a big red-gum limb had dropped - it missed



them fortunately. No facilities here (except for running water, and a drop-in firewood supply). The Wakool appears to be the bigger river; this is not perhaps surprising in that this is the ancestral Murray River. Some mature *Acacia stenophylla* were growing near the junction; they make a fine tree. Pied Butcher Birds were again seen, and a Little Eagle being chased by Peewees.

PIAMBE. We stopped at the Piambe - Highway corner. Harlequin Mistletoe was seen again, this time on Bullock Bush. A Red-backed Kingfisher was on the electricity wires. Other birds seen within a distance of about 50 metres were Rufous Whistlers, a Pallid Cuckoo and a White-winged Triller, and possibly a Black-eared Cuckoo.

PIAMBE-BOLTON ROAD. Most of the land has been cleared, but mallee vegetation is along the roadside. Some of the birds seen this stretch were Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, Singing Honeyeaters, and a Yellow-plumed Honeyeater (like a White-plumed Honeyeater, but a yellow plume and streaked breast). Miners were fairly common, but were now the White-rumped Miner. These are like the Noisy Miner, but are very pale beneath and with much less black on the head. At one stop, a pair of parrots at first appeared to be the common Red-rump parrot, but were the much more colorful Mulga parrot.

MANANGATANG. - CHINKAPOOK. There is a back road, so that the trip can be made off the highway. Birds along this stretch included a group of Singing Honeyeaters in an acacia, Pied Butcherbirds and Blue-bonnet Parrots.

TCHUM LAKES (Birchip- Narraport Rd). There are two lakes. One is a recreational lake, with a camping area and Pied Stilts. The other is a wonderful wildlife sanctuary. There is a peninsula off the main road, and around the back are several tracks into sanctuary. Clamorous Reed-warblers were very numerous and clamorous again. We again saw White-breasted Woodswallows, three different cormorants, and a Musk Duck displaying. Highlights however were Blue-wing Parrots, Black-tailed Native Hens, Cockatiel and Rufous Songlark. A total of 28 species counted here, including Swamp harrier and Little Eagle.

GLENLOTH. A patch of *Acacia saligna* is growing along the roadside, possibly planted by the school many years ago.

LAKE MARMAL. Black-tailed Native Hen were again seen several times in the cover along the road edge.. We were able to creep up bit by bit in the car, until we were only about 20 metres away. They are attractive birds; dark colored with white wing spots, and green and orange beaks. Almost all of the birds that are rare (to us) we were able to see at least several times. E.P.



## MT TERRICK TERRICK EXCURSION

We are so used to eucalypt forests that a visit to a native cypress pine forest is something special. Mt Terrick Terrick is quite different to the local forests with the major tree being a conifer, but the birds are those of northern Victoria also.

At our first stop in the forest, a Barn Owl was sighted, and some of the group were able to get a good view.

As we drove to the picnic ground, a Common Bronzewing was at the edge of the road. We were able to look, and then drove quietly past, with the cars passing only a few metres from the bird.

During lunch, Mallee Ringnecks flew into the trees at the picnic ground and we were able to see them very easily.

The forest is grazed, and there is relatively few shrubs in the forest, except on the granite outcrops. Showiest of the forest plants was the Pimelea Daisy-bush. In one patch of the forest they are quite numerous. Plants seen in flower on the granite hills included Grey Mistletoe, Snow Mint-bush, Rock Correa, Deane's Wattle, Nodding Rice-flower, Nodding Blue-lily, and Rock Isotome. The narrow-leaf Rock-fern was also quite common. Spreading Night-phlox was also found.

The bird list for the reserve was

Restless flycatcher	Willy wagtail	Galah
White-plumed honeyeater	Dusky woodswallow	Barn owl
Black-faced cuckoo-shrike	Common Bronzewing	Swan
Red-rumped parrot	Diamond firetail	Goldfinch
Brown treecreeper	Mallee ringneck	Song lark
White-browed babbler	Peaceful dove	Blue wren
Red-browed firetail	Southern Whiteface	Wood duck
Yellow-rumped thornbill	Crested pigeon	Magpie
Grey fantail	Hooded robin	

On the road between Eaglehawk and Mitiamo the birds seen include

Red-rumped parrot	Crested pigeon	Magpie
Welcome swallow	Masked lapwing	Galah
Pied cormorant	Nankeen Kestrel	Sparrow
White-necked heron	Black duck	Mudlark
White-fronted chat	Sacred ibis	Goldfinch
White-faced heron	Brown hawk	Starling
Black-shouldered kite	Raven	



## NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

BELLS SWAMP is again a swamp, and well worth a visit. On September 25th, there were several groups of cygnets. 27 Yellow-billed Spoonbill and 15 White-necked Herons were seen in the south-eastern part of the swamp, to make a particularly impressive sight. A small flock of Pied Stilts were also seen on the swamp, to make a new record for Bells Swamp.

BIRD LIST ADDITIONS. Many of these are additions for Nuggetty by Terry Brain.

Hoary-headed grebe	n	Great Cormorant	n	Starling	n
L'tle pied cormorant	nw	Pacific heron	n	Maned duck	n
White-faced heron	n	Sacred ibis	en	Blk. duck	enw
Wedge-tailed eagle	n	Little eagle	n	Barn owl	n
Masked lapwing	n	Crested pigeon	n	Silvereye	n
Pallid cuckoo	n	Tawny frogmouth	n	Boobook	n
Sulphur-c' cockatoo	n	Fairy martin	n	Kookaburra	n
Black-f' cuckoo-shrike	n	Golden whistler	n	Blackbird	n
Restless flycatcher	n	Grey fantail	n	A. raven	n
Striated thornbill	n	Varied sittella	n	W.F. chat	n
White-eared h' eater	n	East. spinebill	wn	Pied stilt	o
White-plumed h' eater	n	Spot. pardalote	n	Swan	0
New Holland h' eater	n	Grey currawong	n		
Dusky woodswallow	n	Mistletoe bird	w		

BEARDLESS BEARD ORCHID. Two specimens of the Beardless Beard-orchid (*Calochilus imberbis*) was discovered during the Tuesday excursion (Sept 29th), growing at Walmer. This is the second discovery in the district for this spectacular orchid - the previous sighting was at Taradale. The orchid is very similar to the Bearded orchid, but without the beard. Like the Bearded orchid it has quite beautiful markings on the petals.

SILVER BANKSIA AT MT ALEXANDER. Previously, Silver banksias have been observed on the granite hills north of Mt Alexander. The new sighting is on the road running parallel to the ridge, on the eastern side of Mt Alexander. This, like most of the other specimens is a very mature specimen.

GOLDFIELDS GREVILLEA. The Goldfields Grevillea (*Grevillea dryophylla*) is a holly-leaved, shrubby grevillea growing in Wattle Flat forest. A specimen has been observed growing in Odgers Road, to make it the closest known wild specimen to Castlemaine. Perhaps, before settlement, it was on the hills near the north-western part of the town.

GREY THRUSH has been reported nesting in a caravan at Walmer - Muckleford.



## CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB 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.

Friday 9th Oct. CHINA with John Zwar.

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

Sat 10 Oct. BENDIGO excursion of Bird Observer Club.

Sat 10 Oct. MUCKLEFORD. Muckleford forest tour with F. Blake and R. Mills. Meet S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30 p.m.

Wed 14 Oct. HARCOURT RESERVE. Meet at 27 Doveton St at 4.15 pm. Leader: E. Perkins.

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

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

Wed 22 Oct. CHEWTON AREA. Meet at Chewton Cemetery at 4.15 pm. Leader: B. Ibbitson.

Wed 28 Oct. BELLS SWAMP. Meet at Bells Swamp, (Maldon-Dunolly Rd) between 4.00 and 5.00 pm. Leader: M. Oliver

Wed 4th Nov. TUNNEL HILL. Meet 4.15 at Castlemaine motel (Melbourne rd). Leader: F. Blake.

Wed 11 Nov. CASTLEMAINE NORTH. Meet 118 Blakeley Rd at 4.15 pm. Leader: R. Mills.

Fri 13 Nov. WESTERN AUSTRALIA. A tour of W.A., and its wildflowers, with Rita Mills. 8.00 pm.

Sun 14th Nov LYALL GLEN. B.O.C. excursion.

Fri 11 Dec MEMBERS and VISITORS NIGHT.

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Tuesday afternoon excursions leave 27 Doveton St at 1.30