

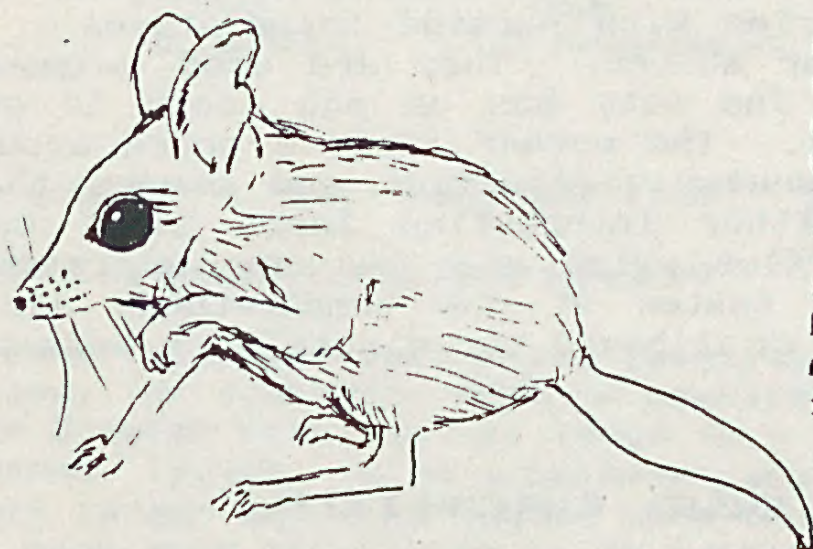
CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

MAY 1989

#145



FAT-TAILED DUNNART



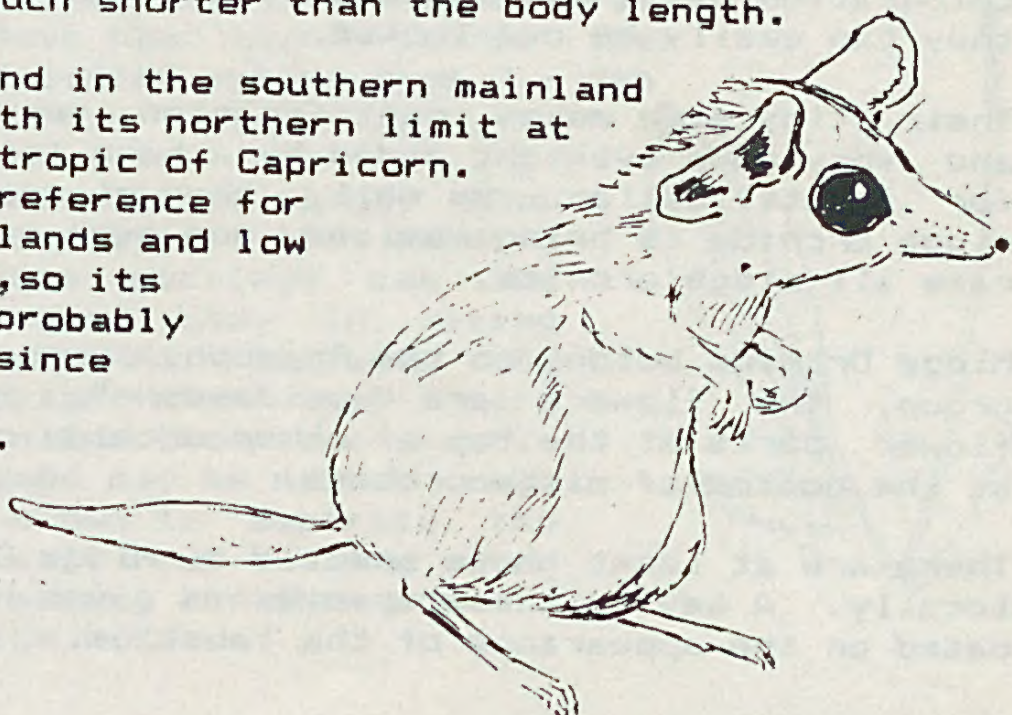
A Fat-tailed Dunnart was shown at the April meeting of the Club.

The Dunnart was accidentally killed near Maldon, when it was mistaken for an ordinary house mouse.

Fat Tailed Dunnarts are said to be fairly common in the district, and can be found in hollow logs. It is about the size of a house mouse, but has large ears and eyes, and a short fat tail. The tail (in Victorian populations) is much shorter than the body length.

It is found in the southern mainland states, with its northern limit at about the tropic of Capricorn.

It has a preference for open grasslands and low shrublands, so its range has probably increased since European settlement.



Although it has a superficial resemblance to a mouse, the Dunnarts are marsupials, and in the specimen the pouch could be clearly seen. The scientific name is *Sminthopsis crassicaudata* (referring to the thick tail).

The Fat-tailed Dunnart is said to be completely nocturnal, so it is surprising for this specimen to be found during daylight hours. They often feed in the open, the food being insects and other invertebrates.

Any further information about the local distribution of these interesting animals would be welcomed.

From W.A. Naturalists' News, July 1988

"Echidnas are very nearly poikilothermic ('having a body temperature which varies with outside temperatures'). They don't sweat, pant or shiver. They are good swimmers and lay leathery eggs. The baby has an egg tooth to cut its way out of the shell. The mother forms a pouch around the young echidna by muscular contraction and exudes the milk through the skin. Other interesting facts about echidnas are their pelvic girdles which are the same as crocodiles. Also they have been tested at low temperatures and found to have a heart beat of 2 beats per minute at a body temperature of 10°C."

AUTUMN MIDGE ORCHIDS

Midge orchids are usually about 10 cm high, or less, and range in colour from greenish-brown to a dark purple-brown. They have a few to about 40 tiny flowers towards the end of a slender stalk. This size and colouration helps make them very difficult to see, and they can easily be overlooked.

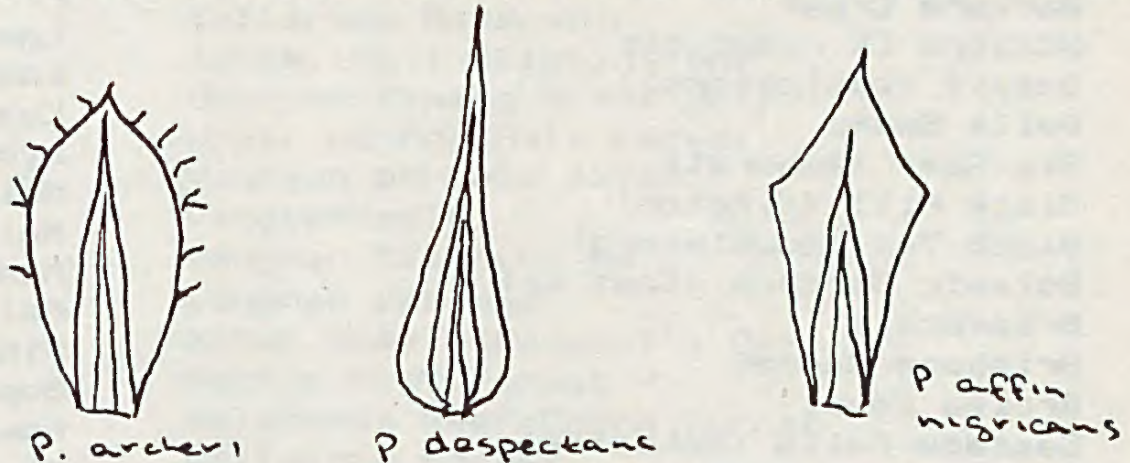
Their tiny size makes identification very difficult, and very good eyesight aided by a hand lens is needed for identification. As well, the classification of midge orchids is being revised, and even experts cannot name all midge orchids.

Midge Orchids belong to the *Prasophyllum* genus. In this group, the flowers are "upside-down", so that the flower parts at the top of other orchids can be found at the bottom of midge orchids.

There are at least three species of Midge Orchid found locally. A key to these species is given here, and is based on the appearance of the labellum.

Labellum hairy *P. archeri*
 Labellum without hairs
 Labellum widest at base, narrow, tapering
 into an acute point *P. despectans*
 Labellum broadest near middle ... *P. affinis nigricans*

In his new orchid book, Jones does not give a name to the Victorian orchids related to *P. nigricans*/*P. rufum*.



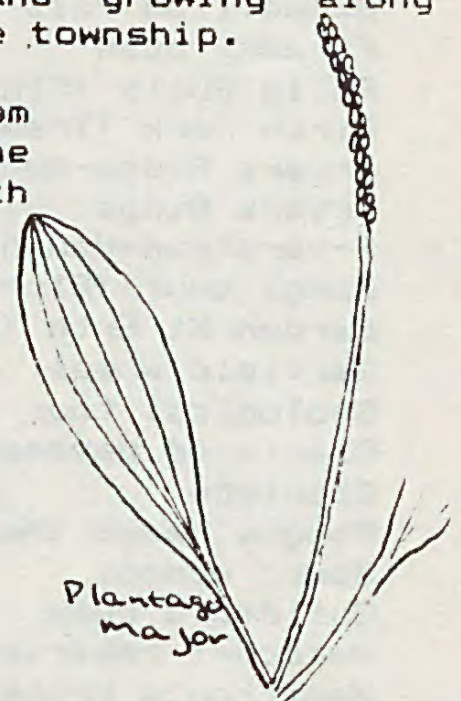
If you can't beat them, eat them One of a series

GREATER PLANTAIN

Greater plantain is a close relative of the common rib-grass, or flatweed, that is prevalent in most lawns. The Greater Plantain has large (5 - 10 cm wide) spoon-shaped leaves, with prominent parallel veins. It is much larger and more robust than the common flat weed. I have seen it growing in my garden, and along Barker Street (near the band hall). It seems to like damp conditions, and can usually be found growing along Forest Creek or Barkers Creek, in the township.

The seeds may be eaten, and seeds from plantain have been found inside the stomachs of bodies dating from 3 - 5th century.

Plantain seeds become sticky when wet, and so stick to passing animals. This mucilage can be turned to good use, in making jelly-like drinks. Collect the flower spikes when they turn brown, and place them in a plastic bag. The seeds may be rubbed out, and then blown to separate the waste material. Pour boiling water on to the seeds, and then add to sweetened ice water.



C.F.N.C. Excursion List

Aboriginal Wells (Clunes)
 Angahook Forest Park
 Astronomy Evening
 Axedale
 Barfold Gorge
 Barkers Creek
 Barkers Ck reservoir
 Basalt (Daylesford)
 Bells Swamp
 Big Reef (Amhurst)
 Black Hill (Kyneton)
 Block 74n (Muckleford)
 Botanic Gardens (Cast'ne)
 Bradford
 Brisbane Ranges
 Brolga Count
 Cascade Falls (Metcalf)
 Castlemaine North
 Cairn Curran
 Chewton bush
 Clay Pits (Campbells Ck)
 Creswick & Creswick nursery
 Cobaw Ranges
 Coliban Falls
 Dargile reserve (Heathcote)
 Devil's Kitchen (via Ballarat)
 Dinah Gully (Chewton)
 Dry Diggings (Mt Franklin Nth)
 Drummond bush
 Emberton forest
 Eucalypt tour (Mt Alexander)
 Expedition Pass
 Faraday bush
 Fells Gully (Clunes)
 Firth Park (Trentham)
 Fryers Ridge-Monk walk
 Fryers Ridge
 Fryerstown-Vaughan walk
 Fungi tour (Elphinstone)
 Garden St Erth (Blackwood)
 Garfield wheel
 Geological tour
 Glaciated pavement (Eppalock)
 Glenluce
 Goughs Range (Maldon)
 Gower school
 Guildford bush
 Harcourt reserve
 Hamilton's crossing
 Hepburn
 Jackass Flat (Bendigo)
 Jim Crow Range

Kalimna & Kalimna Point
 Kaweka Sanctuary
 Laanecoorie
 Lal Lal
 Lerderderg Gorge
 Little Bendigo
 Local Geology
 Loddon Falls
 Lyal Glen
 Lyonville and Wombat Forest
 Maldon-Cast railway walk
 Maldon railway line
 Mandurang Forest
 Melville Caves
 Mineral springs tour
 Mopoke Gully
 Mosquito Flat (Mary'h)
 Mt Alexander & Koala Park
 Mt Beckworth
 Mt Franklin
 Mt Lofty (Redesdale)
 Mt Tarrangower
 Muckleford Forest
 Muckleford Gorge
 Newstead-Muck'd walk
 Norwood Hill
 Nuggetty Ranges (Maldon)
 Oak Forest (Mt Alexander)
 Ocean Grove Nature Reserve
 Paddy's Ranges (Maryborough)
 Pilchers Bridge
 Pine Forest (Cast N)
 Pond life
 Porcupine Ridge
 Queenscliff
 Redesdale bushland
 Rheola (bus trip)
 Rise and Shine (Clydesdale)
 Sailors Falls
 Salinity Tour (Axedale)
 Salomon Gully (Bendigo)
 Salters Creek (Loddon R)
 Sandon Forest
 Serendip Wildlife research
 Sewerage ponds (Bendigo)
 Sewerage ponds (Castlemaine)
 Shelbourne
 Shicer Gully (Guildford)
 Smith Reef
 Spring Gully/Eureka township
 Stuart Mill
 Summer bush
 Talbot Forest

Taradale reserve
 Taradale-Fryerstown walk
 Tarnagulla
 Tarrangower-Nuggetty
 Terrick Terrick
 Trentham Falls
 Tullaroop Reservoir
 Tunnel Hill (Elphinstone)
 Unknown Miners Grave Gully
 Upper Loddon Sate Forest
 Vauhan boronia patch
 Vaughan walk
 Vaughan District walk
 Vaughan Springs
 Water Wheel (Campbells Ck)
 Wattle Flat Forest
 Welshmans Reef/Cairn Curran
 Wellsford Forest
 Werona
 Werona/Shepherds Flat
 Whipstick Forest
 Wombat Forest
 Wychitella campout
 Yandoit
 Zoo (Melbourne)

OVERNIGHT EXCURSIONS

Bacchus Marsh
 Colac
 Grampians
 Grampians campout
 Halls Gap
 Little Desert
 Macropus Park (Kerang)
 Mildura
 Nelson
 Otway Ranges
 Princetown/Port Campbell
 Reef Hills (Benalla)
 Rushworth
 Snake Valley (Linton)
 Strathbogie Ranges
 Warby Ranges
 Warrnambool
 Wood Wood (Murray River)

BHL



Blank Page Digitally Inserted

NOTES FOR APRIL

WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE was seen to pick up a rabbit at Guildford

BRUSH BRONZEWING. A photograph of these Barkers Creek residents has been taken by the Palmers. Brush Bronzewing is a very uncommon bird in the district. The close relative, the Forest Bronzewing is however quite common. When walking through the bush it is quite common to disturb one on the ground, and to hear and see it as it flies off. The two birds are similar in general appearance. The Brush Bronzewing has a chestnut throat and nape. In the Common Bronzewing the throat is grey, and the nape is brown.

BEEHIVE has been seen in the Plane Trees in Mostyn St, outside the old high school.

RAT KANGAROO has been seen near Vaughan. It was seen in late afternoon, and was thought to have been a female with young. Rat Kangaroos were thought to have been quite common in earlier years. Some reports give 25-30 being shot at Sutton Grange in the 1880s. Possibly the specimen seen was a Potoroo. This species has been seen recently in the Grampians, and at Great Western.

JONATHON APPLE has been seen in flower.

WINGLESS MOTH. A specimen was shown at the April meeting. It had emerged from its case, and laid eggs on the outside, so that the case was almost hidden.

AUTUMN ORCHIDS. Five species were seen in a radius of a few metres near Chewton. These were Tiny Greenhood, Autumn Greenhood, Parsons Bands, and two Midge Orchids. These later orchids are tiny - one was identified as *Prasophyllum archeri*, and the other a close relative of *P. rufum*/*P. nigricans*. A specimen of the Autumn Greenhood (*Pterostylis revoluta*) was shown at the meeting. It was one of a group of about five orchids found, lying on the ground. It is thought that they may have been dug up by choughs.

SNOW GUMS AT SIDONIA. S. Bruton has found Snow Gums growing at Pastoria (at the Sidonia turnoff). This is a new record for area 9 of the plant list.

TUAN AT BARKERS CREEK. A resident found a cat with a dead animal, thought, from the description, to be a Tuan. Tuans are not uncommon in the district, but are rather fierce, and so not often caught by a cat.

AUTUMN ORCHIDS. The late summer/autumn rains has meant prolific flowering of autumn orchids. Parsons Bands have been particularly numerous. They have been seen in thousands in the Muckleford Forest and Smiths Reef. Tiny Greenhoods are also rather numerous, sometimes growing in the roadway at Muckleford. There have also been some fine specimens of Autumn Greenhood seen.

LAND CONSERVATION IN VICTORIA - A 200 YEAR STOCKTAKE. The Club has received a copy of a booklet with this title, published by the Soil and Water Conservation Association of Australia. It is recommended reading, and can be borrowed by members.

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF AUSTRALIAN MAMMALS. The Australian Museum book was formerly on sale at about \$60, but is now being remaindered, and can be bought for less than \$30. It is an excellent book, and a bargain at this price.

GOLDEN WHISTLER has been seen in a Campbell St garden

RENAMING THE GRAMPIANS

It has interested me considerably that the Government is considering reverting to the aboriginal name for the Grampians. I am sure this would have pleased Major Thomas Mitchell who named them in the first place. Reading through his journals it becomes very obvious that his preference was always for the aboriginal name of a landmark, and even re-named some of the places that Oxley had named. This quote from his "Three expeditions into the interior of Eastern Australia: etc etc, Vol 2, published in 1839 shows something of his attitude -

"In adding this noble range of mountains (the Grampians) to my map, I felt some difficulty in deciding on a name. To give appellations that may become current in the mouths of future generations, has often been a perplexing subject with me, whether they have been required to distinguish new counties, towns, or villages, or such great natural features of the earth, as mountains and rivers. I have always gladly adopted aboriginal names, and in the absence of these, I have endeavoured to find some good reason for the application of others, considering descriptive names the best, such being in general the character of those used by the natives in this and other countries."

R.M.S.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Fri 12 May. FIVE REGIONS OF AUSTRALIA with Rob Watkins.
Bendigo F.N.C and Vic Nature Photography Group. High
School at 8.00 p.m.

Sat 13 May. MT FRANKLIN AND HEPBURN SPRINGS. Lunch at
Mt Franklin and then at Hepburn Forest. Meet cr Yandell
and Gaulton St at 10.30 a.m. sharp, or Pound Lane corner,
Guildford at 10.45.

Thur 25 May. Business meeting. 7.30; 38 Campbell St

Sun 28 May. BLACK HILL, KYNETON. Bird Observers Club
outing. Meet 11.00 a.m. sharp at S.E.C., Mostyn St.

Fri 9 June. ROADSIDE CONSERVATION. Speaker is Graeme
Hill, of Bendigo F.N.C. High School at 8.00 p.m.

Sat 10 June. KOOROOCHANG FALLS. Meet SEC, Mostyn St at
1.30 sharp. Leader is I. Higgins.

Sept 8-9 W.V.F.N.C.A. campout at Castlemaine

Fri: Normal meeting night

Sat: 9.00 excursions

Sat: 1.30 excursions

Sat: 7.00 W.V.F.N.C.A. meeting

Sat: 8.00 Evening program

Sun: 9.00 excursions

Sun: 12.00 barbeque lunch.

Sat 14 Oct. SANDON. Joint excursion, led by Ballarat
F.N.C. Meet Black Duck hotel at 10.30 a.m. Take lunch.
Plants and birds.

Oct 21-23 CRESWICK CAMPOUT. W.V.F.N.C.A. campout at
Creswick. Stay at Adekate camp, Dean. Tours of Creswick
forest and Mt Beckworth.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. Inc. P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450.
Committee: George Broadway (Pres), Barbara Maund (Sec),
Maggie Oliver (VP), Rita Mills (Newsletter), Kaye Turner
(Program Sec), Ern Perkins (Treas), Margaret Dunne,
Elma Kelly, Ian Higgins, Lesley Perkins (Librarian).

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1989

Pensioner/student	\$3	Single	\$5
Family	\$8	Supporting	\$12
Newsletter Posted: Membership subscription plus \$5			

SUPPER ROSTER

May 12: M Downie, K Meehan

June 9 E & F Blake