



CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

MAY '88

#134

A Place to Visit

The new Koala Park at Mt Alexander is well worth a visit. The turn-off is about 200 m past the entrance of the old park, to the left, just opposite a small dam on the right. It hasn't been signposted yet.

The picnic area is rough, but the toilet facilities are good. There is a large turnstile into the park itself, big enough to take a wheelchair.

The path to the left is easy walking, with good views while the path to the right is uphill past a big rock formation and down towards the west fence. There are some magnificent views. Another path leads off from these, but is rougher (it's signposted "Cockatoo Rocks" just off the south path).

We only saw three koalas, but there are lots of birds in the park, and we also saw a Swamp Wallaby.

Bird List - White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honey-eater, Red Wattlebird, Buff-tailed Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, Striated Pardelote, Spotted Pardelote, White-throated Treecreeper, Varied Sittella, Choughs, Little Raven, Magpies, Grey Currawong, Scarlet Robin, Flame robin, Superb Blue Wren, Crimson Rosella, Kookaburra, And several I didn't manage to identify!

From "Wildlife Australia". Dec. '87.

Dragonfly Reserve - Skikoko, an island off Japan, is the location of a proposed 50 ha dragonfly reserve. The area of marsh and paddy fields, surrounded by low forested hills is home to 64 species of Dragonfly - 1/3 of the entire Japanese dragonfly fauna. The first land was purchased in 1985 wutg tge gekf if WEF and soon after the Tombo no Kai (Dragonfly Society) was set up.

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

SALSIFY *Tragopogon porrifolius*

Salsify is an erect plant growing to about a metre. It has grass-like leaves, and a rather large terminal violet dandelion-like flower. It has a thick parsnip-like taproot, and this is the portion usually eaten.

It has a milky sap when cut; this can help distinguish the grass-like leaves before flowering begins.

Salsify is moderately common, and is abundant in some parts of the district, such as along the Calder Highway near Kyneton. The plant is relished by stock, so Salsify is usually found only in ungrazed areas.

Gerard wrote in 1597 that Salsify is "a most pleasant and wholesome meate, in delicate taste far surpassing either Parsenep or Carrot"

The long white roots should be peeled, and then steamed or boiled. Some describe the taste as being like baked salt fish (and hence another common name, Oyster Plant).

The roots are best collected before flowering begins (when they become stringy and tough).

The young leaves may be cooked as a vegetable, and the roots have been roasted and used as a coffee substitute.

Salsify is very highly regarded as an edible plant by many. For example, "Salsify was one of the unhappy casualties of the contraction of our taste for vegetables which occurred in the first half of this century"

It is, perhaps, worthy of inclusion in the home vegetable garden.



Sharing an Apartment

Mrs Betty Morse

The Original Tenants - Termites build their mounds like architectually designed homes. To keep their chambers cool and moist their buildings have cavity walls, insulation, a weatherproof surface and are built high to catch the breeze. It is no wonder that the other animals move into these high-rise apartments.

Second Tenant - the Hooded Parrot digs into the termite mound to build its nest. In this hollow the female lays a clutch of one to six eggs on the bare floor. Although the termites cannot expel the intruder they respond quickly by sealing the nesting hollow.

The Third Tenant - before the eggs hatch, a moth uses the hollow to lay its eggs. It does so at a time that allows both the parrots' egg and its own to hatch together. There is method in this madness, for the moth larvae feed on the excreta of the young birds, and later pupate in the floor waste, even in the walls of the cavities.

When the Hooded Parrot has vacated the nest yet more tenants, the Long-tailed Finches, rodents and reptiles are waiting to move in.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Rita,

Re the Mistletoe-bird item in the March notes. I asked Russell if he had made any observations.

He has seen these birds a number of times passing droppings - which they do quite frequently when eating the mistetoe berries.

Having perched in the usual way the bird pulls itself into a more upright stance, bringing its rear forward, then takes several sideways steps along the branch while the dropping is passed onto it.

Wyn Palmer

NEW CFL MAGAZINE

A new reference book "The Bird Atlas of Victoria" has been released and is available from the Conservation, Forests and Lands Shop, 240 Victoria Pde., East Melbourne, 3002 and at RAOU Headquarters, 21 Gladstone St., Moonee Ponds, 3039. A short review of the book is in the new Magazine, "Common Ground", published by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, and is available from the club Library.

A number of interesting articles are in the magazine, one of particular interest for this area is a comprehensive three page article by Charles Fahey, about Anderson's Mill at Smeaton.

STREET TREE DIRECTORY Part 1

BERKELEY ST (North Side) 1/5/88

----- Kennedy St	
1	English Ash
1	Flowering Ash
3	Claret Ash
3	English Ash
5	Claret Ash
7	English Ash
9	Flowering Ash
9	English Ash
9	Flowering Ash
11	Claret Ash
13	English Ash
	Flowering Ash (x2)
	Claret Ash
	English Ash
----- Barker St	
	Kurrajong (x8)
29	Liquidambar (x2)
----- Hargraves St	
	Kurrajong (x11)
43	Cootamundra Wattle (x3)
45	Kurrajong (x2)
	Cootamundra Wattle copse
----- Urquhart St	
	Kurrajong (x15)
----- Fletcher St	

BERKELEY ST (South side) 16/4/88

----- Kennedy St	
	Claret Ash (x2)
	Flowering Ash
2	English Ash
4	Claret Ash
6	Flowering Ash
8	Claret Ash
10	English Ash (x2)
12	Claret Ash
14	English Ash (x2)
16	Claret Ash
	Golden Ash
	Claret Ash
----- Barker St	
	London Plane (x7)
30	Claret Ash
	London Plane (x4)
----- Hargraves St	
	London Plane (x8)
48	River Red Gum
48	Kurrajong
----- Urquhart St	
	Kurrajong
	Willow-leaved Peppermint
	Silky Oak
	Prickly Paperbark
52	Claret Ash (x2)
54	Kurrajong
58	Prunus 'elvins'
58	Kurrajong (x2)
60	Acacia sp

BERKELEY ST (South side) cont

60	Kurrajong
64	Purple-leaf Cherry Plum (x2)
----- Fletcher St	

HUNTER ST (South side) 16/4/88

----- Kennedy St	
	English Ash (x2)
2	Claret Ash ?
4	Eucalyptus sp
	Gawler Range Wattle
6	Southern Blue Gum
8	Claret Ash
10	Bracelet Honey-myrtle
12	Swamp Mallett
	Melaleuca sp
	Claret Ash
	Desert Ash
----- Barker st	
	London Plane
	English Ash (x2)
	London Plane
22	English Ash
24	London Plane
24	American Ash
26	London Plane
28	English Ash
----- Hargraves St	
	English Ash (x2)
	Japonica
	English Ash (x2)
30	Claret Ash
32	English Ash (x2)
34	Claret Ash (x2)
36	English Ash (x5)
	Apple
----- Urquhart St	
	Desert Ash ? (x3)
	Cape Broom
	Cootamundra Wattle
	Golden Wattle
	Desert Ash
	Golden Wattle (x2)
	Claret Ash
	English Ash
50	Claret Ash (x3)
52	Yellow Gum
52	Desert Ash
54	Claret Ash
54	Bracelet Honey-myrtle
	Pittosporum sp
	Cootamundra Wattle (x3)
----- Fletcher St	

NOTES FOR APRIL

CAPE BARREN GOOSE AT CLYDESDALE. It was resident for several days (Mar 23 -25th) at The Dare farm. This is a new record for this district. Although Cape Barren Geese are usually found towards the coast, they are occasionally seen along the Murray and even into the Riverina.

DARTER AT CAIRN CURRAN. This new record was by Gary Cheers, of Maryborough F.N.C. Darter have been recorded previously at Tullaroop, and Laanecoorie.

LITTLE BITTERN AT BELLS SWAMP. The solitary Little Bittern was also observed by Gary Cheers during December. This is also a new record for the bird list.

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANTS. Sixty five Little Black Cormorants were seen on Mar 25th at Cairn Curran. They were roosting on the dead trees south of the highway bridge, with a solitary Little Pied Cormorant.

SPINE-TAILED SWIFTS AT CASTLEMAINE. About 8 Spine-tailed Swifts were observed at Castlemaine North and in the township on a stormy day towards the end of March. Swifts are often to be found moving with a front.

PINE CONES AND COCKATOOS. Two sets of pine cones were shown at the April meeting. One set was from Castlemaine, chewed by White Cockatoos, and the other from Moyston, chewed by Yellow-tail Black Cockatoos. The difference between the two was quite apparent.

LANKY BUTTONS. A potted specimen of Lanky Buttons (*Leptorynchos elongatus*) was also shown, in flower. Lanky Buttons is one of the rarer plants of the district, known to occur only in Kalimna and Smiths Reef. It is fairly similar in appearance to the common Billy Buttons, and in the bush, flowers in Spring.

BIRD DROPPING SPIDER has been observed in Campbell St. It is also known as the Death's-Head Spider because of its skull-like appearance.

RED-BROWED FIRETAILS have been observed at Muckleford and also between Vaughan and Glenluce Springs. Another flock was seen to be feeding on *Polygonum* at Yandoit

YELLOW-TUFTED HONEYEATERS. Flocks of these were observed at the Red, White and Blue Mine at Muckleford Forest, drinking at the water's edge with Fuscous and White-Naped Honeyeaters. Unlike some other honeyeaters, this species drinks from the edge of the water.

OWLET NIGHT-JARS have been setting up residence in nesting boxes at Barkers Creek.

CENTRAL VICTORIAN EUCALYPTS?

This list gives some of the Eucalypts that have not yet been recorded in the Castlemaine Area and which could possibly be present.

BLAKELY'S RED GUM (*Eucalyptus blakelyi*) is similar to the familiar River Red Gum. It differs in that it usually grows in elevated positions, such as granite hill tops. Its caps are long and conical, (compared with the shorter beaked caps of River Red Gum) and the juvenile leaves are ovate to orbicular (compared with narrow lanceolate). It grows at Melville Caves and Axedale. It has been reported for Mt Alexander area and Mt Tarrengower but has not been confirmed at either of these two localities. Both are however, likely spots to find it.

YARRA GUM. (*E. yarraensis*) Yarra Gum was formerly known only for the river flats near Yarra Glen, but over the past few years it has been found in the Ballarat area, but is not known to occur further north than this. It is rather like a rough-barked Swamp Gum. Its buds and fruit are slightly smaller than those of the Swamp Gum, and the caps and fruit less conical. Possible localities are on river flats to the south e.g. near Trentham or Daylesford.

BROOKER'S SWAMP GUM (*E. brookerana*). Major occurrence of this tree is in Tasmania, but it is known to occur in the Otway Ranges and Bullarto area, where it was formerly regarded as a form of Swamp Gum. It is usually a tall and straight forest tree, with a denser crown than Swamp Gum. The leaves are paler beneath, and the juvenile leaves have conspicuous oil glands and a wavy margin. The fruit are more domed, and the valves more exert. It could be more extensively distributed.

LONG-LEAVED BOX (*E. nortonii*). The other Long-leaved Box, *E. goniocalyx*, is very common in the district. *E. nortonii* differs in the dull grey to glaucous juvenile and adult leaves, buds, fruits and branchlets. Its main location is in N.S.W. and east Gippsland, but it also occurs north of Ballarat. Usually it is found on harsh stony sites.

VICTORIAN EURABBIE (*E. pseudoglobulus*). This eucalypt is very like the commonly planted Blue Gum. It differs in that the buds and fruit are green (not glaucous) and are smaller, and in threes.

Usually it is a tree of wetter forests such as the Otway Forest. However, it grows south-west of Avoca, and could perhaps be in our district. It is such a distinctive tree however, that any such occurrence would not long go un-noticed.

SOUTHERN BLUE GUM. (*E. bicostata*). This gum is also closely related to the Tasmanian Blue Gum but has glaucous buds and fruits which are in threes. Castlemaine is almost mid-way between three Victorian Occurrences of the tree (near Benalla, near Melbourne, and near St Arnaud). Like Eurabbie, it is a distinctive tree and easy to recognise.

INLAND BLUE GUM (*E. leucoxylon* subsp *pruinosa*). The common Yellow Gum found in this district is *E. leucoxylon* subsp *leucoxylon*. Inland Blue Gum differs in the glaucous juvenile leaves, buds and fruit. It is found scattered through Victoria e.g. St Arnaud, Horsham, and Rushworth. It flowers in spring.

MOUNTAIN GREY GUM (*E. cypellocarpa*). Mountain Grey Gum is a tree of the wetter forest, and grows to a large smooth-barked forest tree. The juvenile leaves are like those of Blue Gum, but are green. The buds and fruit are like those of Long-leaf Box. Mountain Grey Gum can be found in the Daylesford district and could perhaps be found in the wetter forest to the south of Castlemaine.

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, Geoff Sitch, Robyn Holden, Gunter Leibl, Elma Kelly.

Librarian: Lesley Perkins.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1988

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

SUPPER ROSTER

May: J. Buntine, E. Warne June: B. and T. Collins

From R.H.S.V. 1985 Diary

"Runner beans and some plants spiral from left to right, whereas honeysuckle and some other climbing plants spiral from right to left. Has anyone observed whether native plants of their acquaintance tend to spiral in the same direction? Has anyone a theory why it might be so?

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Sat 7-Sun 8 May. MELVILLE CAVES CAMPOUT. Club campout at Melville Caves. Meet Railway Goods Shed, Kennedy St at 10.30, Saturday. Walk along Back Road begins 1.30. On Sunday, leave Lower Camping Ground for walk at 10.00.

Fri 13 May,. RAISING ORPHAN ANIMALS with Beri Perry, and a display of the orchid and wildflower paintings of Alice Newell. 8.00 p.m. at High School.

Sat 15th May. THE SHELBOURNE AREA. Birdwatching N.W. of Maldon. Meet S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30 p.m. sharp.

Fri 10th June. SALINITY IN NORTH CENTRAL VICTORIA with Roger Standen. 8.00 p.m. at the High School.

Sat 11th June. SALINITY IN THE AXEDALE AREA. An excursion to some salt affected areas. Meet S.E.C. Mostyn St at 1.30 sharp.

Sun 12th June. MUCKLEFORD, NUGGETTY. Excursion with Geelong F.N.C. Meet Caravan Park entrance, Welshman's Reef at 9.30 a.m. Take your lunch.

Sun 12th June. Evening meeting with Geelong F.N.C. at 7.30 p.m. in the Newstead Hall. Speaker is A. Hartup.

Mon 13th June. CLYDESDALE AREA with Geelong F.N.C. Meet at Newstead P.O. at 9.30 p.m. Leader is A. Hartup.

Fri 8th July. FUNGI. Talk by Hilary Weatherhead.

Sat 9th July. FIRTH PARK (Wombat Forest). Fungi.

Sat-Sun 27-28 Aug. BALLARAT CAMPOUT with W.V.F.N.C.A., based at Pax Hill scout camp.

Sat 9th Sept. THE GRAMPIANS with Jane Calder.

Sat 17th Sept. TARNAGULLA. Combined excursion with Maryborough and St Arnaud F.N.C..

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

Fri 14th Oct. KAKADU with John Zwar

Fri 21st Oct. WARBY RANGES. W.V.F.N.C.A. campout
8.00 p.m. Fri: Orchids with Roger Briggs.
9.00 a.m. Sat: Excursion to Warby Ranges
6.30 p.m. Sat: Annual meeting of W.V.F.N.C.A.
8.00 p.m. Sat: Booklaunching - Plants of NE Vic.
9.00 a.m. Sun: Excursion to Reef Hills, Benalla