

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

SEPTEMBER 1989

#149



Ever Been "Had"?

On a recent sunny morning, while walking our dog, I came upon a liberalscattering of acorn-shaped droppings on a track up in the pines.

At first I wondered if thy might have been those of a wombat, but the strong eucalyptus smell, given off when crushed, assured me they were those of a koala.

On taking a walk again in the same area, I kept a lookout in the trees for the "blob" that might be a koala. At last I saw just such a shape, on a limb high up in an ironbark - strange I thought, but there it was. As usual, my binoculars were not with me!

Returning later with Max, binoculars, camera, (and dog), to my dismay my "koala" proved to be the largest choughs' nest we had ever seen!

But there's a koala there somewhere - he left the evidence behind on that track.

Wyn Palmer

PLANTING THE TIP

On the weekend of Aug 26th - 27th, the City Council with the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (from Bendigo) had a tree planting program at the old tip in Diamond Gully Road. Although advertised quite extensively, and with letters to many local organisations, only a handful of local residents took part on the Saturday morning, and only one was present on Saturday afternoon.

The planting program was well organised. Plants were obtained from C.F. & L. The trees were local species - Red Box, Grey Box, Yellow Gum and Red Ironbark. The wattles were not local however. They were Willow Wattle (from W.A.), Cootamundra Wattle and Early Black Wattle (both from N.S.W.).

The tip had been levelled, and ripped. Plants were put in along the rip lines, and placed 3-4 metres apart. A tablet of fertiliser was added to each hole. The plants were mulched with eucalypt mulch from the Bendigo eucalyptus distilleries, and a small guard was placed around each tree. The guards resembled pale-yellow orange-bag net, and were held in place using by bamboo stakes. The bags are said degrade after a short while, and help fertilise the trees.

The City Council deserves commendation for its enterprise in planning such a venture. If held again, perhaps the Castlemaine F.N.C. could take a more active part.

Outing to Shadbolt Reserve

The outing to the Whipstick on Saturday 12th August promised to be a bit soggy early in the morning, but the day turned out to be a lovely one of sunshine and shadow - and a cold wind. Our first stops on Whipstick Road were just brief wanders to check what was coming into flower. A small patch of Dwarf Greenhoods (*Pterostylus nana*) was found and two Leopard orchids (*Diurus maculata*), also several wattles, including Wirrakee, which was just starting to flower, and *Crocea exalata*. One flower was found on a plant of *Goodenia varia*, satisfyingly answering many guesses as to what that "strange looking plant" was.

On reaching Shadbolt Reserve in Skylark Road most of the group walked up to the lookout, a twenty minute round trip which naturally took a group of Field Nats considerably longer, as there was plenty to admire, including *Phebalium* and Rosey Heath-myrtle. The view from the 1½ metre platform was surprising, and as the air was clear, Mount Moliagul and Mt Koorong were plainly seen with reasonable detail with a pair of binoculars. On the way back a flock of 'Spotted Pardelotes were seen quite close to the track.

By the time we returned to the picnic area it was time for lunch so we were well stoked up for the afternoon walk! Some followed the Circuit Walk, while some detoured to the Old Tom Mine - well we thought we did, but, while talking to a fellow the following week who had just run the circuit, I found that we hadn't quite got there after all - perhaps next time?.

We walked the track in an anti-clockwise direction, starting at the race (just past a good patch of Dwarf Greenhoods). The whole walk is an easy one, starting on the flat, past named trees, and then gradually rising up onto a hillside covered in rough quartz. Those who headed for the mine paddled through low lying flats, dodging around to find a place we didn't have to risk falling in the small creek without losing the track altogether. Bill was the wise one - he wore gumboots (but we won't admit they had holes in them!)

The track goes past an area, mainly of Green Mallee (*Eucalyptus viridis*), which has been mown for eucalyptus, and has regrown to about 2 metres. The steepest pinch came just after that spot, up to a quartz reef that has been explored for mining on several occasions by the look of it. Some seems to have been done by hand, but some of the big boulders of quartz that have rolled down the hill suggest that machinery has been used in more recent years.

We finally returned to the reserve in time for afternoon tea, again taking much longer than the signboard suggested, because there were plenty of plants to see, and quite a few birds.

Bird list - Magpie, Australian Raven, Fantail Cuckoo (four were seen in the one spot when Doug and I were there a week later), Red Wattlebirds, Spotted Pardalotes, White-eared Honey-eater, Grey Currawong, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Grey Fantail, Varied Sitella, Superb Blue Wren.

List of plants in flower - Dwarf Greenhood (*Pterostylus nana*), Leopard Orchid (*Diurus maculata*), Fairy Wax (*Eriostemon verrucosus*), Guineaflower species, Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), Wirrakee (*A. williamsonii*), Rough Wattle (*A. aspera*), Gold-dust Wattle (*A. acinacia*), Ploughshare Wattle (*A. gunnii*), Gorse Bitter-pea (*Davisia ulicifolia*), Catsclaws (*Grevillea alpina*, *Correa reflexa*, *Crocea exalata*, *Goodenia varia*, *Phebalium obcordatum*, Rosey Heath-myrtle (*Baeckea ramosissima*) (lots!), Green Mallee (*E. viridis*), Silky Hakea (*Hakea sericea*).
Mula Mula.

ANZAC HILL, MALDON

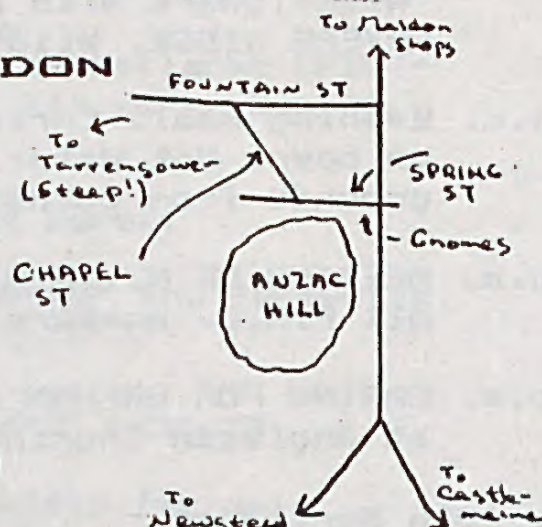
Anzac Hill is perhaps one of the least known areas of Maldon. It is just to the west of High Street. Turn left into Spring Street (at the Gnome corner) and park near the Peppercorn Trees, near the corner of Chapel Street.

There is a fairly steep climb to the summit, which is marked by a field gun.

Many years ago, the area was planted out with Mahogany Gums and Lemon-scented Gums. These are now of some considerable age. There are trees of all ages, indicating that regeneration is taking place. There are a few other trees, such as Monterey Cypress and Italian Cypress.

Local trees also occur. These are mostly Long-leaf box, with a few Grey Box and Yellow Box. Much of the area is open, with a good stand of Kangaroo Grass. Varnish Wattle is also present. A visit during lily and grass flowering times would be worthwhile, to find out the numbers of these to be found on the hill.

Chapel Street leads to Fountain Street. Although this road is signposted "no through road", it leads, rather steeply in parts, to the summit of Mt Tarrengower.



WESTERN VICTORIA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB'S ASSOCIATION

WEEKEND MEETING Sept 8-10th

Friday 8th September.

8.00 pm. CASTLEMAINE DISTRICT. Talk/slides by FNC members. Castlemaine High School Canteen.

Saturday 9th September

9.00 a.m. Half Day Excursions. Meet Botanic Gardens Rose Garden Car Park, Downes Road.

GUILDFORD - birding with Kaye Turner, Maggie Oliver & Beri Perry.

KALIMNA RESERVE - wildflowers with Ian Higgins

BARKERS CK RESERVOIR/KOALA PARK with Rita Mills.

LOCAL GEOLOGY - with Ern Perkins.

1.30 p.m. Half day excursions. Meet Botanic Gardens car park in Downes Road.

WATTLE FLAT - wildflower walk with Rita Mills.

GLENLUCE - Loddon River at Glenluce Springs, and wildflowers with Ian Higgins.

FRYERSTOWN TOUR - geology, history and wildflowers with Ern Perkins.

FRYERS RIDGE. Wildflowers with George Broadway.

5.30 p.m. Evening meal. Christ Church Anglican Hall will be open. Hot water will be available. Enter grounds from corner of Kennedy & Forest Street.

7.00 p.m. MEETING OF W.V.F.N.C.A. in Christ Church Hall. All F.N.C. members invited to attend.

8.00 p.m. CARING FOR ORPHAN ANIMALS. Talk by Beri Perry, at Anglican Church hall. Supper.

Sunday 10th September.

9.00 a.m. Half day excursions. Meet Botanic Gardens car park, Downes Road.

GOWER & MUCKLEFORD. Bird watching with Kaye Turner & Maggie Oliver.

Mt ALEXANDER TOUR with Ern Perkins.

LOCAL WILDFLOWERS with George Broadway.

REVEGETATION. Visit local revegetation projects with Ian Higgins.

12.30 p.m. LUNCH at Botanic Gardens. Barbecue materials are available if ordered. Cost \$2 per person.

ADEKATE CAMPOUT Oct 20-22nd.

The campout² is being conducted at Adekate Fellowship centre, on the Creswick-Dean Road. Host club is Creswick F.N.C. There is sleeping accommodation for 64 people, with bunk style beds. Sleepers should provide their own blankets, sheets, pillowslips, sleeping bags etc. Meals provided are evening meal (Fri), breakfast, cut lunch and dinner (Sat) and breakfast and lunch (Sun).

Hot water is available at the camp - bring a thermos and cups. Tea and coffee, milk and sugar will be provided

Cost is \$5 per person per night. Meals are \$6 each, or \$30 for all meals. Bookings by Oct 1st, with \$10 deposit. Forms can be obtained from Secretary (B Maund) or Treasurer (E. Perkins).

Fri 20 3.00 pm onwards. Arrival at Adekate camp
6.00 pm Dinner
8.00 pm Mr Ray Draper of Ballarat Wildlife Park

Sat 21 8.00 am Breakfast
9.00 am Excursion to Mt Beckwith
12.30 pm Lunch.
4.00 pm approx. Depart for camp
5.30 pm Dinner
6.30 pm WVFNCA meeting
8.00 pm John Clements of Ballarat CF&L -
Highlights of his work. Supper.

Sun 22 8.00 am Breakfast
9.00 am Creswick State Forest
12.30 pm Lunch at Camp
1.30 pm Final get together and farewells.

C.F.N.C. PUBLICATIONS

The Club has the following booklets for sale

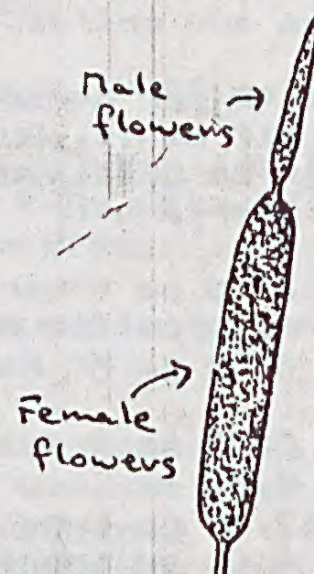
A Tour of Castlemaine City. 30c.
Birds of the Castlemaine District. 20 c.
Botanic Gardens Castlemaine - Tree List. 20c.
Castlemaine Bird List. \$1
Castlemaine Plant List (Edition 6) \$1
Common Orchids of the Castlemaine District. 30c.
Eucalypts of the Castlemaine Area. 30c.
Fryerstown Tour. 30c.
Geological Features of the Castlemaine Area. 30c.
Orchids of the Castlemaine District. \$1
Street Trees of Castlemaine. 20c.
Wattles of the Castlemaine District. 30c.
Wildflowers of the Castlemaine Goldfields. 20c.

CUMBUNGI (BULRUSH)

Cumbungi can be found along most of the local streams. It is a tall plant growing to several metres, and is easily recognised by the dark brown rod-like flowers.

The male and female flowers of Cumbungi are separate. The spike of male flowers is much thinner than the broad and lower female flowers. Depending on the species, the upper male spike is slightly separated from the female flowers.

The plant has many uses. The leaves can be used to make mats, or ropes, or for thatching. The fluff from the flowers can be used to stuff pillows and mattresses. It was formerly used to stuff mattresses on ships, and these had the advantage of being able to double as life rafts in the case of shipwreck!



The pollen is produced in abundance, and is said to have a rich nutty flavour. It can be obtained by holding the male spike over a plate, and tapping the flower. At the right time of year, a shower of pollen falls to the plate. The pollen can be used like tumeric to colour rice, or cooked in cakes, scones or pancakes.

The underground stems contain starch and were eaten by the aborigines. The stems were roasted, and the starch obtained by chewing. The fibre that remained was then used for twine.

The tiny seeds may also be eaten, and also the young female flowers.

Two native species of Cumbungi may occur in the district - *T. domingensis* and *T. orientalis*. They are difficult to distinguish. Some of the differences are:-

	<i>T. domingensis</i>	<i>T. orientalis</i>
Spike separation	2 - 5 cm	< 2 cm (or joined).
Bracts of female flowers.	Numerous, spoon-shaped.	Few; narrowly spoon-shaped.
Female spikes	5-15 mm diameter 11-24 cm long	15-20 mm diameter. 7-31 cm long.
Stigmas	Linear	Narrowly egg shaped.
Height	2 m (up to 3 m)	2 m (up to 4.5 m).
Leaf width	4-10 mm	6-20 mm.

NOTES FOR AUGUST

RUFIOUS FANTAIL AT EXPEDITION PASS. Whirrakee (Magazine of Bendigo F.N.C. in its June issue, reports the sighting of a Rufous Fantail at Expedition Pass Reservoir on 2/4/89. "This species is a rare visitor to the Bendigo region and has only been reported twice previously, at Pilchers Bridge in 1980 and the North Whipstick in March 1983. Rufous Fantails are migratory, arriving to feed in March/April. The bird observed was probably on its migratory journey. This species is similar to the Grey Fantail in size and shape, but is easily distinguished at a distance by its obvious orange-rufous rump."

The Club's bird list has two records for Rufous Fantail also; for Chewton and for Lyall Glen.

WHIRRAKEE BIRD NOTES include White-breasted Sea Eagle (at the Bendigo sewerage works, 16/4/89) and Australian Hobby (at Harcourt on 8/4/89).

WIRILDA IN FLOWER. Some Wirilda in Kalimna were in full flower on Aug 13th. Wirilda, or Acacia retinodes, is one of the later flowering wattles, and usually flowers in late spring e.g. in November. This season appears to be unusual in that some plants of a range of species, have flowered at an unusual time.

PEACEFUL DOVE has been seen in Berkeley St, west of Barker St.

LITTLE FALCON was seen near the corner of Berkeley St and Barker St.

SPOTTED QUAIL-THRUSH were seen near Tunnel Hill, south-west of the Railway dam. This is the second sighting in this vicinity.

BEARDED DRAGON was seen at Muckleford North when a stump was knocked over.

TINY GREENHOODS were seen in patches over over 100 at during the excursion to the Whipstick in late August.

5 PURPLE SLUGS were seen, by a usually sober and reliable observer, crossing Happy Valley Road.

Whirrakee, the magazine of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, has 22 contributors for 1988. Can the 'Castlemaine Naturalist' beat this for 1989? If you have not done so yet, why not give a contribution? Items can be given to Rita Mills or Ern Perkins.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Fri 8 Sept. CASTLEMAINE DISTRICT by a panel of Club members. 8.00 p.m. at Castlemaine High School Canteen. This is the first part of the Western Victoria Field Naturalists Club program for the weekend. See separate notice in this issue.

Sat 9 Sept. Half day excursions. See separate notice.

Sat 9 Sept. CARING FOR ORPHAN ANIMALS. Beri Perry, Anglican Church Hall, at 8 p.m.

Sun 10 Sept. Excursions. 9.00. See separate notice.

Fri 13 Oct. THE LAST SHANGRI-LAH (LADAKH). Speaker is John Zwar, of Mt Martha F.N.C. High School at 8.00 p.m.

Sat 14 Oct. SANDON. Joint excursion, led by Ballarat F.N.C. Meet 27 Doveton St at 10.00 a.m. sharp, or Black Duck hotel at 10.30 a.m. Take lunch. Birds and plants.

Sun 15 Oct. FRYERSTOWN AND FRYERSTOWN GREVILLEA. Bendigo F.N.C. excursion. Leader is Ian Evans, Bendigo Native Plant Group. 10.30 a.m. at Market Car Park.

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

Fri 10 Nov. BORNEO with Gretna Weste.

Fri 8 Dec. MEMBERS NIGHT.

Fri 9 Feb. GUNBARREL HIGHWAY with Nicolette Hooper.

Sun Mar 18. MOUNTAIN PEPPER on Mt Alexander. Excursion with Bendigo F.N.C. to look for Mountain Pepper.

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
(Prog Sec), Ern Perkins (Treas), Margaret Dunne, Elma
Kelly, Ian Higgins, Lesley Perkins.

Subscriptions for 1989. Pensioner/student: \$3
Single: \$5 Family: \$8 Supporting: \$12
Newsletter posted: membership subscription plus \$5

Supper Roster:
Sept 8: G. Sitch, J. Buntine
Oct 13: M & R Holden