

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

July 1989 #147



RARE SEDGE AT KOOROOCHEANG

One of the rarest plants in the district was found near the falls on the recent excursion to Kooroocheang.

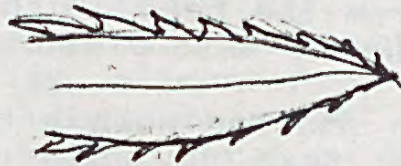
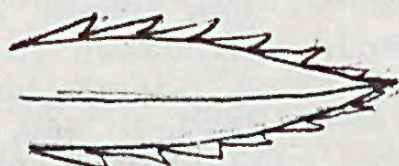
The sedge, known as *Carex incomitata*, also grows at Barfold gorge, where there is a small colony close to one of the organ pipe formations.

In my quick (full gallop) look below the Kooroocheang Falls, I noticed only one plant (there may be more), which was growing amongst grass on sloping (basalt) ground not far from the watercourse in a sheltered valley.

Only described as a species in 1986, it has been recorded for N.S.W. and the mountain country of eastern Victoria, but with only one other occurrence in Western Victoria (near Casterton). It was previously considered a form of *Carex appressa* which is very common in the Castlemaine district.

C. appressa however can easily be distinguished in several ways.

	<i>C. appressa</i>	<i>C. incomitata</i>
Habit	Large dense tussocks to 1 metre high	Small looser clumps 30-40 cm high
Habitat	Swamps, soaks, stream banks	Forest & woodland ridges and slopes (basalt soil in our district)
Leaves	Antrorsely scabrid	Retrorsely scabrid



Seeds Brown and corky

Black

Lacking colourful flowers and resembling grasses, sedges, as a group, are not widely noticed or collected. For this reason, as well as the possible confusion with *C. appressa*, *Carex incomitata* may be more common than previously thought.

A fresh look at lightly grazed basalt country (is there any left?) may turn up further occurrences.

REF: Thiel K. R. *Muelleria* 6(3) 201-204 (1968)

I. Higgins.

EXPLORING THE MURRAY

Years ago, when we had been discussing explorers, Doug made the suggestion that we follow the Murray ourselves, from the source at Tom Groggin to the sea, and this year we decided to do it, except that we started further downstream.



We started our trip in earnest at Corryong, making our way there via Myrtleford, Yackandandah, Tangambalanga, and Tallangatta - marvellous names! We stayed overnight in the Mt Mittamitite Cara. van Park (we took on-site vans and cabins all the way).

Next morning, after the mist had lifted a bit, we set out for Biggera. However the local tourist map showed that we could go a little further down a gravel road to Coleman's Bend cross the river there and come back on a tarred road. At Indi Bridge we could see the road following the valley on the other side of the river, so decided to go as far as Coleman's bend - and wound up in someone's cow yard! the road didn't go in a loop at all! However, it was all worth it for the scenery alone, and to see the Murray as a stream about 5 or 6 metres wide.

From there we turned back and headed for Albury. The river was well up, and many of the flats were covered with water and the lagoons were full. Lots of birds were evident, especially Greater Egrets and White Ibis - and Galahs!

The meandering river, willows and other trees in Autumn colour, birds, cattle and sheep on the flats between the mountains and hills, made the drive a most enjoyable one. Some of the scenery was quite dramatic, such the granite hills we stopped near not far from the head of the Hume dam, and Pine Mountain, which I've decided we must visit sometime.

The rain started soon after our afternoon tea stop, and kept up all the next day, but as we were staying with my sister, and Doug was visiting antique shops, it didn't really matter.

From Albury we followed down the NSW side of the river, and as it was beginning to fine up, birds were in evidence again.

The water had been released from Lake Mulwala, but, because the wind was so cold I jibbed at taking a photo (it looked rather drear, anyway) and found later that this year will be the last that the lake will be drained, as they are fixing things so the maintenance can be done without releasing the water.

We crossed the river at the attractive towns of Barooga and Cobram, and headed for Barmah, where we stayed the next two nights. The first bird we saw when we walked down to the river that evening was a beautiful little Azure Kingfisher. We saw several more next day.

We were told at the store that the river was too high to use the side tracks near the Darnya Centre, so we decided to go for a walk near the caravan park next morning. There were lots of bluebells, like the ones I found at home near the railway line, and marsh daisies. There were also lots of birds, including our first Yellow Rosella, and lots of White Cockatoos.

We left Barmah a bit reluctantly, but decided we'd better keep moving, and headed for Swan Hill, stopping at Turrumbarry weir on the way. The river was very high there, and foam all over the surface below the barrages attested to the salt in the water. Despite rain and cold there were quite a few birds about, especially Noisy Miners, and a Little Eagle made a brief appearance. From there we headed up to Cohuna, Koondrook and Barham. Koondrook has one of the old Red Gum saw mills there (still working), with most of the timber being taken from Gunbower Island. From there to Kerang, and a brief stop at the bird hide on the Kerang lakes, where we saw a few Mountain Ducks, white Ibis, and an Azure Kingfisher, but little else. We arrived at Swan Hill in the rain, and only stayed one night, though there was plenty we could have done and seen there.

Next morning we went to the Pioneer Settlement, as Doug wanted to Photograph a couple of old punt gun barrels that he'd seen there years ago, and we felt we ought to do the right thing and actually go on the river itself, so took a cruise on the "Pyap". Again, we didn't see a lot of birds, but we did see Dusky Moorhens, Black Duck and Greater Egrets.

We left in the rain for Mildura about one o'clock, and had a look around Robinvale on the way, comparing it with the way it was 30 years ago when we were building the school. It was still cold so we didn't stop often. Once we did when I spotted some parrots I was sure weren't familiar to me and kidded Doug to go back. I'm glad we did, because there were three pairs of Mulga Parrots, the first I'd seen in the wild.

In Mildura we stayed at the Golden River Caravan Park, next to the Fauna Park and on the bank of the river. Next day we did our birdwatching along the bank in the morning, and from the Paddleboat "Rothbury" in the afternoon. The trip on the boat was a real treat. The further we got from the town the more birds there were, including feral pigeons and starlings which have taken over a lot of nesting hollows in the dead trees lining the river. There were also a number of Whistling Kites, including a fledgling solemnly watching

us from his nest. Several Caspian terns were also seen. Bird list for the day was 34 species.

Although the afternoon was fine and sunny the next morning was wet again, and we decided to move on, through Cullulleraine, where I saw Blue Bonnets, Renmark, Berri, where we made our first ferry crossing, and Loxton. We stopped for afternoon tea near Moorook on a lagoon. It was fine and sunny by this time, and quite a few birds were about, including more Caspian terns.

We decided to stay at Waikerie for the night - and wound up staying for two. One of the sights at that Park were the dozens of Mudlarks which gathered on the oval behind the Park each evening.

We'd heard that the road between Morgan and Blanchtown might not be too good, so we decided to go on to Morgan and visit the Conservation Park, then back to Overland Corner (the name has always fascinated me) and return to Waikerie for the night.

We drove out on the south side of the river, through orange orchards, and then open scrubby country, to Cadell, where we crossed on the ferry. At Morgan we re-crossed the river to the Park. There were lots of birds, including about a dozen male Mistletoe birds in one tree. We really enjoyed our walk around the lagoon before lunch and a walk down to the river afterwards. Again we saw the river bluebells here. We found ourselves opposite the huge pumping station which pumps water to Port Augusta and beyond.

We drove back to Cadell on the old road, which was dirt, but in good order, and recrossed on the ferry (old hands by this time!) and headed for Overland Corner. This is a historic area, with an old Pub, classified by the National Trust, which is the first stone building in the district. There is a walking trail, part of it local history, part natural history. We just followed the part that went down on to the river flats, after first inspecting the old quarry with its fossilized corals etc. The walk to the lagoon was a delight, with many birds in evidence. We finished up with a list of 53 species for the day but missed seeing the Regent Parrots which come down to the Pub each morning for bread scraps, but we did see Chestnut-crowned babblers and Spiny Cheeked Honeyeaters. We also saw a flock of wrens, which I finally concluded must be just the Suberblue Wren, but the colours were absolutely brilliant.

As we'd found that the road to Blanchtown wasn't so bad after all we cut across to it from Cadell, and we were glad we did because the river cliffs there are magnificent. In fact, they are worth the trip just to see them all the way down to Walkers Flat. It was along there that I saw the Purple-gaped and Pied Honeyeaters. Mannum is another good bird area, though it was there I saw a lone female Red-capped Robin, and a flock of Variagated Wrens, consisting only of a female and an immature male. As we were close to houses I couldn't help wondering if cats were responsible for the situation.



Next overnight stop was Tailem Bend, and from there we headed for Goolwa, via Strathalbyn and the antique shops. We got a cabin at Middleton, six miles from Goolwa, for two nights, and a late night cancellation gave us accomodation for the rest of the long weekend - which was just as well. It was raining again and I would have hated to have had to sleep in the car!

We visited Hindmarsh Island and drove down to the Murray Mouth lookout, and were well satisfied to end our journey down the river there. We could have walked down to the mouth itself from the barrages, I guess, but I can think of a lot of reasons why we didn't!

There's lots of places to visit in the area, including a bird hide at Goolwa. It was there I finally saw the Royal Spoonbills - about a dozen of them sheltering in the reeds with some White Ibis. The ibis were preening but most of the time the spoonbills kept their bills tucked snugly in their feathers. -

We took 10 days to follow the river, but could have spent more time in several places, or stayed at some others along the way. The weather dictated at times what we did, but generally it didn't affect us too much. Accommodation was generally quite comfortable, and at Mildura, almost luxurious.

For me the birds were the highlight of the trip. I got a list of 140 species, including a number I had never seen before, or had seldom seen, like the Royal Spoonbills, which I had last seen at Robinvale when I was 14.

I'd recommend the trip to any birdo, lover of history, or of antique shops and museums.

How long to take? About three months for a keen birdo! *Rt. Nick.*

BIRD GROUP FOR C.F.N.C.?

Should the Castlemaine F.N.C. have a special bird watchers group? If so, this could be its constitution.

1. A member may Knot Snipe at another.
 2. Take your Tern and remember that one good Tern deserves another.
 3. Anyone up to Larks gets Swift punishment.
 4. Toucan join for the price of one. Mynahs can join at half price.
 5. Members are not to Chat during the program.
 6. After meetings, members may Bee-eaters and Swallow supper. Once a biscuit is Bittern, it may not be returned to the plate.
 7. In all Club competitions there is to be a Booby prize.
 8. If any club equipment is Bustard, it is to be fixed.
 9. Cars must be filled with Petrel before excursions.
- During walks, anyone Puffin may rest.

[The contributor of this Knot very original article wishes to remain quite anonymous.]

EXCURSION TO KOOROOCHEANG

Despite (or because of) a very cold winter's day, a convoy of six left for Kooroocheang on June 10th.

First stop was at Yandoit, to see Anchor Plants growing along Jim Crow Creek. Anchor Plants are so named because the spiny leaves grow out from the branches, and resemble anchors. It is one of Victoria's rarer plants. It was noted by Major Mitchell near Newstead, and has since become very rare. All of the plants in this part of Victoria are quite old, and do not seem to regenerate. Over the past few years there have been a number of projects (e.g. by Ballarat F.N.C. at Lal Lal) to propagate Anchor Plants, and to prevent grazing near present plants. Other local occurrences are along the Campaspe near Barfold. The Yandoit plants are amongst shrubs, or at the edge of a cliff. These locations have perhaps given it protection from grazing or clearing.

Next stop was to see the Spiny Broom. This is also a prickly plant, with the spiny branches rather like those of the Anchor Plant. The Spiny Broom is however introduced, and perhaps could pose a similar threat as does the other introduced brooms. This was the first record for the Club's plant list. It is a declared noxious weed.

A short distance on, we stopped to examine Mealy Bundy. Until a few weeks ago these would have been identified by Club members as Long-leaf Box. The white powdered buds, and the whitish juvenile leaves indicate that they are now to be called *Eucalyptus nortonii*, or Mealy Bundy.

Kooroocheang Falls is, according to survey maps, situated on Joyces Creek. The falls are picturesque, and well worth braving the cold weather to see. There is a short drop of about a metre, and then a sheer drop over basalt of many metres. Below the falls is a gorge, with many large basalt boulders lining the gorge.

A number of interesting plants were also found here. A sedge (*Carex incomitata*) and Sickle Fern (*Pellaea falcata*) were also seen - each previously recorded by the Club for Barfold area. Other plants included Drooping She-oak, Tree Violet and Blanket Fern.

Kooroocheang Falls are on private property, and permission is needed to visit. From Kooroocheang drive north for 1.1 km along a gravel road. The road then turns west. Continue for another 1.1 km and turn north into the farm property. The location, on the Castlemaine 1: 100 000 map is 355706.

Thanks to the leader, Ian Higgins, for an enjoyable outing.

NOTES FOR JUNE

NEW SPECIES OF ORCHID AT MORNINGTON. A species of orchid found by Mt Martha Field Naturalists has been identified by Geoff Carr as a new species. It is a *Caladenia* resembling *Caladenia rigida* (the Fringed Spider Orchid). It has fringed white flowers in Sept-October.

BIRD NOTES. Pied Currawongs are again frequent in the town, and Grey Currawongs have also been seen. A small flock of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters was observed, feeding on the ground, rather like sparrows.

PTEROSTYLIS ROBUSTA was reported by Graeme Hill to be flowering very early in the whipstick this year.

3 KOALAS were seen in the new koala park by H. Pollock.

NEW PLANTS FOR THE CLUB'S LIST include the White Campion (**Silene pratensis*), from the Wombat Forest, Prickly Broom (**Calycotome pungens*) from Yandoit/Kooroocheang, Derwent Speedwell (*Parahebe derwentiana*) from Wombat and Upper Loddon State Forests, and Broad Sword-sedge (*Lepidosperma laterale* var *maius*) from Kooroocheang.

IN FLOWER ON QUEENS BIRTHDAY 12/6/89. On a visit to the western part of wattle Flat, these were seen in flower.

Alpine Grevillea	Silky Hakea	Gold-dust Wattle
Tree Lucerne	Pink Bells	Spreading Wattle
Gorse Bitter-pea	Waxflower	Golden Wattle
Slender Rice-flower	Sour-sob	Rough Wattle
Cranberry Heath	Red Box	Tall Greenhood

WATTLE FLAT BIRD LIST 12/6/89

Crimson Rosella	Sulphur Crested cockatoo
Flame Robin	Scarlet Robin
Eastern Yellow Robin	Golden Whistler
Grey Fantail	Superb Blue Wren
Weebill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Striated Thornbill
Varied Sittella	White-throated Treecreeper
Red Wattlebird	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
White-naped Honeyeater	Spotted Pardalote
Silvereye	Red-browed Firetail
White-winged Chough	Maggie
Raven (Little?)	

MOUNTAINS IN SUMMER-AGAIN. Rita's article of this name in Cast. Nat Feb 1989 has been reprinted in the "Victorian Nature Photography Newsletter".

SUPPER ROSTER

Jul 14 K Turner, L Perkins

Aug 11 M & M Willis

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Fri 14 July. ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND. Speaker is G.
Broadway. High School at 8.00 p.m.

Sat 15 Jul. BIRDING BEHIND MT TARRANGOWER. Leader is K.
Turner. Meet S.E.C.. Mostyn St at 1.30 sharp.

Thurs 28 July. BUSINESS MEETING at 7.30 p.m. at 27
Doveton St. Please note changed venue.

Fri 11 Aug. EARLY AUSTRALIAN BOTANISTS by Friends of
Royal Botanic Gardens. Melbourne. 8.00 pm at High
School. Supper.

Sat 12 Aug. WHIPSTICK Meet 27 Doveton St at 10.00 a.m.

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

Fri: Normal meeting night: Castlemaine District. High
School at 8.00 p.m. Address by Club members.

Sat: 9.00 excursions. Meet Gardens car Park

Sat: 1.30 excursions. Meet Gardens car park

Sat: 7.00 W.V.F.N.C.A. meeting. Anglican Church hall

Sat: 8.00 Evening program. Beri Perry "Caring for
Native Animals"

Sun: 9.00 excursions. Meet Gardens Car Park
12.30 barbecue - Highland Band Hall.

Sun 17 Sept. LYALL GLEN. BOC excursion

Fri 13 Oct. THE LAST SHANGRI-LA (LADAKH). Speaker is
John Zwar. High School at 8.00 p.m.

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

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.

Sun 22 Oct DARGILE FOREST. BOC excursion

Fri 9 Feb. GUNBARREL HWY with Nicolette Hooper.

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			