

# Castlemaine Naturalist

FEBRUARY '88 #131



## AUSTRALIA DAY BIRD COUNT

For the past few years we have conducted an Australia Day bird count. This involves rising by 7.00 a.m. on Australia Day, and counting the birds seen on the house block in the ensuing hour.

Highlight of this year's count was a group of four Large Black Cormorants flying overhead. It is the first time that we have seen these in the township.

The list of birds seen

Sparrows. No males. A single(?) female flying overhead a number of times.

Silvereyes. A group next door. A couple reached our block via an overhanging branch.

Magpies. Two observations, a pair each time. Calling almost constantly from nearby areas.

Little Lorikeets. A flock of about 10 flew over.

Blackbirds. One female only.

Red Wattlebirds. A single bird active in the neighbourhood, and visited our block several times.

New Holland Honeyeaters. Visited by a small flock. Count was 2,2,1.

Crimson Rosellas. A noisy flock on the Bunya Bunya Pine next door, and two visited.

Large Black Cormorants. A group of four flying overhead. One immature.

This makes a much smaller list than usual. It was a rather cold morning, with a heavy dew carpeting the grass. This may account for the very small number of introduced birds observed.

Some of the birds seen in the hour, but not over or on our block were Starlings (a few on a nearby antenna), Galahs (4 seen wheeling nearby), White Cockatoos (one on the Bunya Bunya Pine at a few minutes to 8 O'clock), and the seven Turtle Doves roosting on a neighbouring tree, not a metre distant from being included in the count.

E.P.



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1987

With so many activities taking place over the twelve months, it is difficult to write a brief report.

Membership has remained strong, and attendance at meetings has been encouraging, some exceeding fifty.

In addition to the regular excursions held on the Saturday following the main meetings, excursions have been held with the Maryborough, Bendigo and Geelong Field Naturalists, and the Bird Observer's Club. Mid-week excursions on both Tuesdays and Wednesdays have been held during spring.

The Club has been represented at campouts conducted by the Western Victoria Field Naturalists Clubs Association. These are interesting and rewarding, and more members could well attend.

Programs for the monthly meetings have been provided by Club members, local residents and visitors. Subjects have included birds, China, Europe, America, the Australian Alps, Western Australia, Central Australia, Kashmir, and local wildflowers. The traditional December members night has continued, and at its usual high standard. Thanks are due to Kay and her good work here.

Following a grant of \$550 from the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, the Club has produced information booklets on a range of topics. "A tour of Castlemaine City" has been the most popular of these, and hundreds have been distributed. The Club has also produced booklets on "Birds of the Castlemaine District", "Wildflowers of the Castlemaine Goldfields" and "Street Trees of Castlemaine". The Castlemaine Plants List has also been printed for distribution.

The monthly newsletter has continued at a high standard, and congratulations to the editor, Rita Mills, are appropriate. It is good to see members contributing.

The business meetings, held on the fourth Thursday, have been well attended, and the excellent work by the Committee is reflected in the present strong position of the Club. Many of the Club's members work quietly and effectively, and this has been noted with gratitude. In particular, thanks to our secretary who is unfailingly efficient and helpful.

A number of conservation issues have arisen during the year, and the Club has responded to these. The resurgence of mining in the district is a matter that is of concern. The Club should perhaps define its policy on mining, and take a more active role.

E. Perkins



Lake Pine Mountains  
(in Summer, anyway!)

by Rita Mills

One of the pleasures of a visit to the mountains in Summer - apart from those lovely cool gullies - is the number of plants still in flower. A group I was with went up to Lake Cobbler, which is about 1/3 the way from Mt Buller to Mt Buffalo in a straight line, and reached through Benalla and Whitfield, for a few days in the first week of January. Lake Cobbler was dammed many years ago, and is quite shallow and safe for swimming. There's a hut marked on the map, but that proved to be only the stone outline and the old iron chimney, and that was all! That, and a pit toilet is the extent of the facilities. We camped near the "hut" between the lake and the bush - a very pleasant spot, and well worth the long, rather rough and dusty climb from Rose River, though its not the sort of place to go on your own without a good reliable vehicle with a good ground clearance.

The first afternoon we took a short walk down to a nearby waterfall, which was graced by Mountain Teatree, Burgan and Lemon Bottlebrush. This was a spot I returned to several times, trying to spot the lyrebirds nearby and trying to identify a bird which called loudly at irregular intervals. I saw it once as it came down behind me, but it disappeared through the bushes at ground level, scuttling quickly from branch to branch, when the rest of the party came down to the spot.

On the second day the whole party (except for a party of three energetic teenage boys, who went off on their own for an overnight camp) climbed Mt Cobbler. The climb was along steady one, first through Woolly-butt regrowth from logging, probably 20-30 years ago. From there it was down onto a creek and up the steep bank opposite, where the trees were further apart, and Waddell daisies were beginning to appear. A blue brachychome (Coarse daisy) was more common here, too, as were the Snow daisies. We eventually came out into a Snowgum woodland and grass covered plateau, before climbing again up through rocks and Snowgums to the lunch spot, which was a couple of hundred metres from the top.

After lunch most went on up to the top, but 2 or 3 children, a mum, and I stayed where we were. I was glad I did, because after I'd recovered, I scrambled down over the rocks nearby to inspect some lovely patches of Hoary Sunray, and found the lovely scrambling form of Baekea gunniana smothering some of the rocks, as well as Bulbine lilies and Coarse and Snow daisies.

The walk back was much easier, with stops for photography and a pleasant interlude at the creek crossing to cool off, as the day was quite hot. Further down this creek fell over the cliff as Dandongadale Falls, and there were several attempts to reach them, but no one managed to, and when we viewed them from the road opposite on the way out we knew why. It is very rugged terrain with impressive cliffs!



Generally the bird-watching was disappointing. The lake had only a few Coots, Black duck, Wood Duck and Little Australian Grebes. There were lots of Kookaburras around, including one nesting pair in a tree above the camp, and quite a number of Red Wattle-birds and Crimson Rosellas. There were also Yellow-faced and White-eared Honeyeaters, Silver-eyes, including one pair nesting at the creek crossing on the way to the falls, a Fantail Cuckoo, Grey and Pied Currawongs, Grey Fantails and the elusive Lyrebirds. At the creek crossing I twice watched what I finally concluded had to be a Pilot Bird, feeding confidently along the creekbed among the stones, quite unalarmed by me, while I watched from a distance of only a few feet. He'd come up through the bushes to eye me off on the first occasion, and then happily went about feeding, ignoring me further.

I went down to the waterfall again after the rest of the party except for the car I was with had left to go home. Two of the lyrebirds nearby started up with a much greater repertoire than I'd heard so far, and included the Gang-gang Cockatoo and the Whipbird in their mimicry, so I guess a lot of the problem bird-wise was the number of the party, and possibly the time of the year. It was certainly quite hot away from the gullies.

The flowers were a joy, though, as I have mentioned, and this is the list of species I saw in flower :-

Red-anther Wallaby Grass	
Grass Trigger-plant	(Stylidium graminifolium)
Ivy Goodenia	(G. hederacea var. alpestris)
Fringe Myrtle	(Calytrix tetragona)
Pink Bells	(Tetratheca ciliata)
Golden Everlasting	(Helychrysum bracteatum)
Clustered Everlasting	(H. semipapposum)
Waddell Everlasting	(H. adenophorum var. waddellae)
Hoary Sunray	(Heliptrum albicans)
Yam Daisy	(Microseris scapigera)
Fireweed Groundsel*	(Senecio linearifolium)
Forest Groundsel	(S. velleioides)
Coarse Daisy	(Brachycome scapiformis)
Snow Daisy	(Celmisia longifolia)
also a daisy bush I didn't manage to identify	
Forest Mint	(Mentha laxiflora)
Lemon Bottlebrush	(Callistemon pallidus)
Mountain Teatree	(Leptospermum micromyrtus)
Burgan	(L. phyllicoides)
Alpine baekea	(Baekea gunniana)
Pale Vanilla Lily	(Arthroposium milleflorum)
Bulbine Lily	(Bulbine bulbosa)
Slender Riceflower	(Pimelea linifolia)
Alpine Oxylobium	(O. alpestris)
Gorse Bitter Pea	(Davisia ulicifolia)
Hop Bitter Pea	(D. latifolia)
Alpine Mintbush	(Prostanthera cuneata)
Slender Stackhousia	(S. viminea)
Wattle Matrush	(Lomandra filiformis)



Heath Milkwort  
Bird Orchid  
Hyacinth Orchid\*  
Native Violet  
Derwent Speedwell  
Tall Bluebell\*  
Hibbertia sp

(Comesperma ericinum)  
(Chiloglottis gunnii)  
(Dipodium punctatum)  
(Viola hederacea)  
(Veronica derwentia)  
(Wahlenbergia stricta)  
(H. aspera?)

Also Tasman Flax Lily (*Dianella tasmanica*) was covered in young fruit, and the Poison Riceflower (*Pimelea pauciflora*) was quite attractive with its red fruit.

\*Seen on the track down to Rose River



## LILIES BY ANY OTHER NAME

Each year, a few more volumes of the Flora of Australia appear. They started off at about \$20 a volume, but now the cost is up to \$50. As there will be over 50 volumes, the complete set will be cost many thousands of dollars.

The most recent issue, volume 35, is the eighth to appear, and deals with the lilies and related plants. Many of our familiar plants have been affected.

The Yellow Stars (*Hypoxis*) used to be in a family of their own, but are now included in the lily family. We have three kinds of Yellow Star. The smallest of the three is now *Hypoxis vaginata* var *vaginata*.

The garlic and onion family is also included in the Lily family, so that the summer weed, the crow-garlic, is now a lily!

Other lilies have changed names. Some of the local plants to be renamed include

Early nancy - now *Wurmbea dioica*  
Smilax asparagus - now *Myrsiphyllum asparagoides*  
Pale flax-lily - now *Dianella longiflora*  
Blue grass-lily - now *Caesia calliantha*



## Notes for Dec/Jan

**YELLOW-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO.** A Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo has been seen several times near Guildford, by T. Holland and a few days later by T. Holland and E. and L. Perkins. It was seen on both occasions towards dusk. The bird, a female, alighted on a nearby pine tree before descending to drink at a water trough. This is the first Club record for this bird in the Castlemaine district.

**LITTLE EAGLES AT GUILDFORD.** A pair of Little Eagles have been seen circling at Guildford for a number of successive days by B. Perry.

**MISTLETOE BIRD AT GULDFORD.** B. Perry has also observed Mistletoe Birds at Guildford, making a new record for area p.

**KOALA TAKES TO A PINE TREE.** During the Club excursion to the oak forest at the base of Mt Alexander, a koala was seen perched about half-way up a tall pine tree, in the centre of some of the pine forest. The location would be perhaps 100 metres from the nearest eucalypt.

**FAIRIES' APRONS AT MT ALEXANDER.** In one of the damper areas of the oak forest, large numbers of Fairies' Aprons were seen. These are swamp-growing insect-catching plants. The flowers have bright purple flowers with a yellow throat, with the appearance of tiny aprons on the end of long stalks. At the base are tiny bladders that trap insects. Fairies' Aprons is rather rare near Castlemaine - this is only the second record for the Club.

**ADDITIONS TO THE PLANT LIST.** A number of new plants for the Castlemaine District have been noted since the latest edition of the plant list was published in December. All of the additions are from Ian Higgins. *Cyperus exultatus*, or the Tall Flat Sedge was found at Yandoit. It is, as its name suggests, a quite large and robust plant, and has several large dense clusters of brownish flowers on short stalks. Another sedge, *Cyperus brevifolius*, or the Globe Kyllinga grows to about 20 cm high, and has a single small greenish flower cluster at the end of the stalk. *Triglochin striata*, the Streaked Arrow Grass, is rather similar to Water Ribbons, but the leaves are very narrow. It was also found by Ian, near the tunnel at Elphinstone. *Pennisetum macrourum*, the African Feather Grass grows at Yapeen.

**BOGONG HIGH PLAINS PLANT LIST.** A list of plants seen on the high plains during mid-January is available from E. Perkins. Photocopying cost is 60 cents.



SWAMP GUM ADDITIONS. A new record for the Faraday-Sutton Grange road has been made, about 3 km past the Mt Alexander turnoff.

WHITE COCKATOOS IN CASTLEMAINE. White cockatoos have been regular visitors over January, passing over (Doveton St) between 8 and 9 each morning, and in the afternoon.

December/January Notes, Barkers Creek

from Wyn Palmer

Red-capped Robin drinking from our water dish.  
Brush Bronzewing feeding in the newly cut dry grass.  
Grey Fantail collecting wool.  
Mopoke calling at night.  
Four pairs of Blue Wrens nesting, three feeding young, one with eggs.  
Grey Fantails nest with three eggs in a pine tree.  
Yellow-faced Honeyeater collecting wool.  
Yellow Robins nesting in gorse bush.  
Pair Eastern Rosellas feeding with two juveniles.  
A young Horsefield's bronze Cuckoo, also two young Grey Shrike-thrushes drinking from our water dish.  
Yellow-faced Honeyeater sitting on eggs. The nest, trimmed with wool, is in a coffee bush.  
Grey Fantails' young flying.  
Varied Sitellas feeding fledged young in the trees.  
Brown-headed Honeyeater collecting wool.  
Yellow-faced Honeyeaters feeding young in the nest.  
Owlet Nightjar, Wood Ducks and possums calling at night.  
Banded native bees taking moisture from damp soil.

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From B.O.C. Newsletter Dec. '87

The Masked Owl which was found by John Robertson on the outskirts of Redesdale, near Bendigo, had evidently been killed in a collision with a car. This species is so rare in Victoria that the Victorian Museum possesses only four or five specimens. It appears to be the first report in the Bendigo district.

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## A GLENLUCE BIRD LIST

Highlights of a visit to Glenluce Springs on 23/1/88 were a pair of White-browed Scrub-wrens feeding among the rocks at the crossing, and a Mistletoe Bird being harrassed and driven off by Red-browed Firetails.

The bird list was

Blue Wren	Crimson Rosella	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Magpie	Mistletoe Bird	Red-browed Firetail
Gold Finch	Spotted Pardalote	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater		White-browed Scrubwren



## CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Fri 12 Feb. EUROPEAN RAMBLE with George Broadway. This is the Annual Meeting. 8.00 p.m. at the High School.

Sat 13 Feb. TULLAROOP DAM. Bird watching. Leave 1.30 sharp from S.E.C., Mostyn St. Excursion is to the far side, near the old church and island. You may wish to take tea.

Feb 20-21 Feb. GEELONG WEEKEND with Geelong F.N.C.

Sat 20th. Morning and afternoon - waders on the Bellarine Peninsula. Evening programme arranged by Geelong F.N.C.

Sun 21st. Morning - sea shores and rock platforms at Aireys Inlet. Afternoon at Angahook Forest Park.

Full program details from E. Perkins, or at the February Meeting

Mar 12-14. V.F.N.C.A. meeting at "Kangaroobie", Princeton. Contact Nancy Bryant, RMD 8405, Timboon.

Frid 18 - Sun 20 March. WARRNAMBOOL. Western Victoria Field Naturalists Clubs Association Campout. There will be a bus available on Saturday. Book by 11th March (055 62 6946 until 28th Feb, then 055 62 2181)

Fri - At Historical Society Clubrooms, 24 Bank St, Port Fairy, from 4.30 p.m.. At dusk, observe Mutton Birds. Bring a torch. Followed by supper.

Sat 9.00. Depart Tourist Information Centre, Cr Raglan Pde and Kepler St, Warrnambool for Killarney Beach. Observe Waders.

Sat noon. BYO lunch at Presbyterian Hall, Koroit. Tea and coffee will be provided.

Sat 1.30 p.m. Tower Hill Car Park. Guided tour.

Sat 7.30 p.m. Business meeting at Warrnambool Art Gallery, followed by Mr Robert Ulmann - subject "Whales."

Sun 9.00 Depart from Tourist Information Centre by car for Childers Cove, Sandy Beach, Ralph Illidge Sanctuary. BYO BBQ lunch, or order meat when booking bus. Depart for home at 1.30 p.m.

Sat 26 Mar. BROLGA COUNT. E. Perkins has details.

Sat 13th March. SIMPSON DESERT with Ken Simpson. Note the changed date. 8.00 p.m. at High School.

Sun 14th March. DOWNSTREAM FROM CAIRN CURRAN. Meet S.E.C Mostyn St at 1.30 p.m. sharp. Leader is M. Oliver.

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