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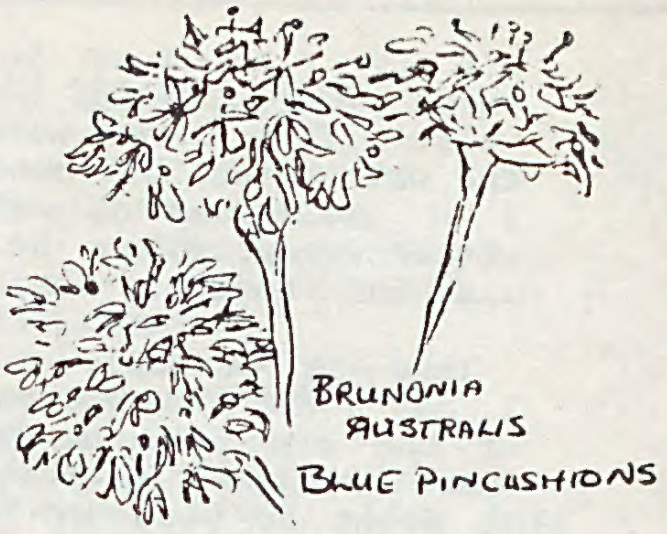
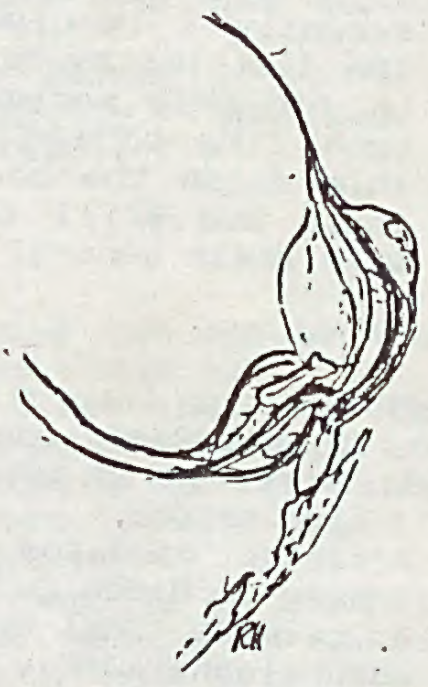


ORCHIDS OF THE CASTLEMAINE DISTRICT

Pterostylus biseta
Fringed Ruddyhood

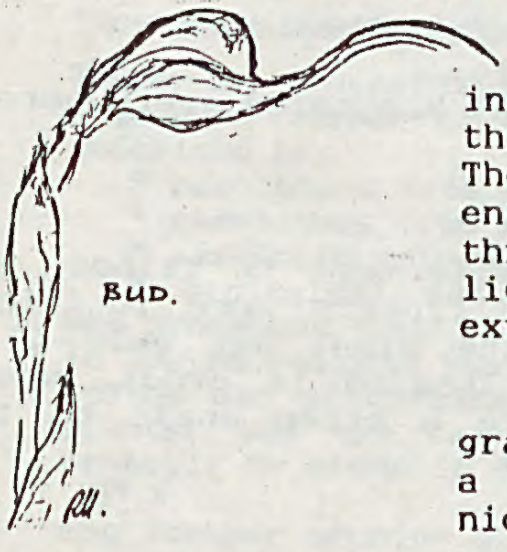
Rita Mills



This uncommon, but widespread, orchid had been recorded for the Glenluce/ Fryerstown/Vaughn road junction, but to the great pleasure of all who joined the outing to Nuggetty last Thursday (20th Nov), it was found on the north side of Mt Moorul that evening.

It is not a tall orchid, being only about 10 cm high, with several spreading flowers. The ones we saw had up to four. Only one was still in flower, with one bud still to open. The other three had finished flowering.

The hood is about 4 cm overall, and the deflexed, joined sepals would be about the same length. The ones we found had very little brown colouring, and may be the Maryborough* form, which is much greener.



The tongue is irritable, flying back into the hood to trap the insect against the column for pollination, at a touch.. The "front" of the hood is almost transparent, while the column can just be seen through the "hump", especially with the light through it. The hood and sepals extend to curving tails about 2cm long.

I had headed back next day to photograph the good specimen, only to find a rabbit had decided it would make a nice entreé. The stem had been snipped

off and nibbled up to the flower and bud, which were dropped. I know the technique well. I've often watched our rabbit doing the same thing, but not with orchids! However, I at least was able to collect the rather withered specimens to sketch. They soon came back to their best in water.

This is probably a lesson for us all. I can't help wondering if our disturbance of the area encouraged its inspection, and therefore the discovery of the tasty morsel? It might be wise in future to tease up the flattened grass again?

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Recently I re-discovered a list of 60 orchids recorded in the district by Mr Fred Taylor. I have now seen and written up for this series, quite a number of them, but would very much like to see and sketch some of the others. Up 'til this month the above would have been high on the list, but there are still these which were recorded years ago, along with their general locations -

Thelymitra luteocilium (Fringed Sun-orchid), Sutton Grange; Smith's Reef (where I saw it 10 years ago).
T. irregularis (Crested Sun-orchid), Blackfellows' Gate Road, Elphinstone.
Aciantus caudatus (Mayfly or Dead Horse Orchid), Newstead side of Green Gully.
A. exertus (Gnat Orchid), same area.
Paracaleana minor, (Small Flying Duck Orchid), S.E. of Vaughn Glenluce.
Prasophylum archerii (Variable Midge Orchid), Muckleford (could be Smith's Reef)
P. odoratum (Scented Leek Orchid), near Taradale; Elphinstone.
Diurus brevissima (Short-tailed Leopard Orchid), Sutton Grange.
D. palachila (Broad-lip Diurus), Harcourt (could be the one along the railway line south of 3CCC)
Caledenia congesta (Black-tongue Caledenia), Woodbrook.
C. filamentosa (Daddy-longlegs), Taradale.
C. testacea (Golden, or Honey, Caledenia) Scattered everywhere (this one has a honey scent)

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* On the following weekend Ern and Leslie went to Talbot, and found the real Maryborough form. The flowers were identical with the one found at Nuggetty, but the plant was only 4 or 5 cm high, with the flowering stalks tending to droop, where as the Nuggetty ones stood up at quite a steep angle to the stem.

R.M.

OCTOBER OBSERVATIONS FROM BARKERS CREEK

White-browed Scrub-wren feeding a young Fantail Cuckoo.
Brown Thornbill feeding a young Golden Bronze Cuckoo.
Two pairs of Wee-bills building nests - one near our house.
Yellow-faced Honeyeaters building anest in a gorse bush.
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater feeding fledglings.
Grey Fantail brooding two young, neat in fork of wattle.
Yellow Robins feeding two young in nest in gorse bush.
Golden Whistlers nest with eggs, in gorse bush.
Pair of Buff-rumped Thornbills with three fledglings.
Little Button Quail, "exploded" from underfoot, flew into a fence and was stunned. It was picked up and closely examined before releasing, unhurt.

Also, I have placed a netting guard around a plant (on crown land) that has been repeatedly eaten off. I think it may be Bossea prostrata. It is the only one I have ever come across.

Wyn Palmer
(greatly assisted by Russell P.)

From "Habitat", Feb. 1983

Trees and Dam Evaporation

"The amount of water evaporating from a dam can be signif-icantly reduced by an appropriatly placed windbreak. For best results the trees should be about four times their own height from the dam. This is where the maximum shelter is, and it also prevents the roots of the trees taking up the water or damaging the dam wall. A small reduction in wind speed will lead to a large saving of precious moisture.

"... The effectiveness of a windbreak depends on its height, density, and its location. The height should be maximised and the foliage density should be uniform from top to bottom and should be from 30% to 50% open. If it is too dense as often the case with cyprus hedges, the sheltered zone is reduced and occurs hard up against the trees." John Dingate.

From "Wilderness" Newsletter, April 1985.

"How is Wilderness Identified?"

There is a general agreement amongst conservation groups, and a growing number of government bodies, that wilderness is characterised by:

* remoteness from significant human development,
* remoteness from mechanised access,
* aesthetic naturalness, i.e., it looks substantially untouched,
* biological naturalness, i.e., the areas natural species and processes function largely undisturbed.

It is recognised that as a result of human developments (including use of chemicals, the spread of feral animals and exotic plants, and the existance of an extensive network of tracks) probably no areas in Australia are entirely natural. But preventing further erosion of the most natural areas is vital.

From "Habitat", June 1985.

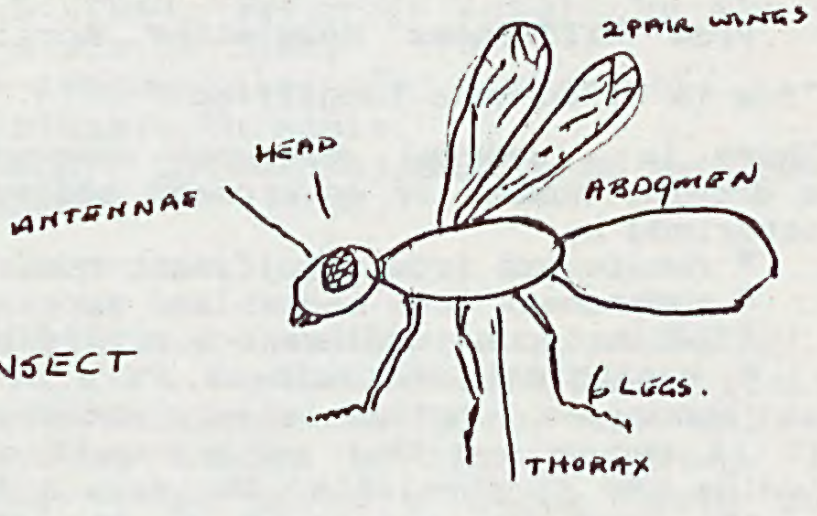
Spiders and Insects - the Differences.

"Along with crustations (such as lobsters) insects, centipedes, ticks, scorpions and so on, spiders belong to a large animal group, the Arthropods. They have no internal skeleton but instead, a hard exoskeleton, segmented bodies and jointed limbs. This highly adapted and successful group includes three of every four animal species. Within this enormous, heterogeneous assemblage, our present concern is the Class Arachnida, which includes spiders, and the Class Insecta. The differences are simple, but critical.

"An insect has a body divided into three segments - head, thorax and abdomen - with usually two pairs of wings and three pairs of walking legs.

"A spider has a body divided into two parts - a combined head and thorax (called a cephalothorax) joined to the abdomen by a narrow flexible wasp waist or pedicel - four pairs of walking legs and no wings. Spiders have neither the antennae not chewing mandibles of insects, but do have pincer-like chelicerae -most useful multi-purpose tools.

erae - most useful multi-purpose tools. They are used to katch and kill prey with an injection of poison (from a poison gland at the base), to dig holes (by means of a rastellum - sharp little rake teeth on the front angle of the basal segment of the chelicera); to hold and carry excavated earth, pebbles, leaves, sticks, food and egg cocoons; to macerate (chemically disintegrate) food ready for eating; to warn off predators by an aggressive display of raised body, spread forelegs, palps (the feeler-like appendages each side of the chelicerae) and chelicerae. The way in which chelicerae are positioned and used determines the taxonomic grouping of modern spiders. The Orthognatha have chelicerae projecting horizontally in front of the head and moving up and down like a hoe, as in trapdoor and funnel-web spiders which must raise their cephalothorax in order to strike downwards. Other spiders became adapted to a different way of life with chelicerae aligned vertically so that each could move independantly and/or sideways, like tweezers. These spiders are placed in a group called the Labidognatha." Jean Edgecomb.



From "Habitat", June 1985.

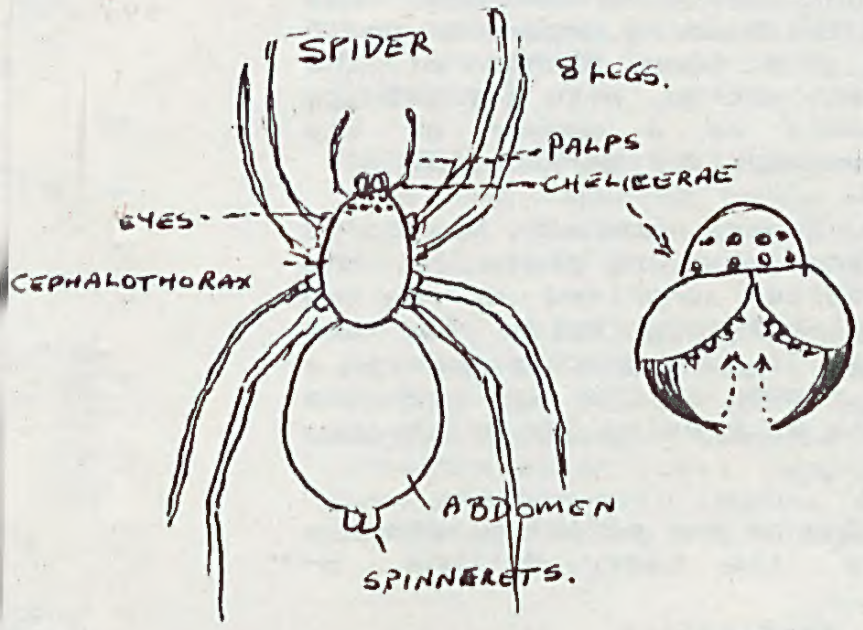
Spiders.

"over 340 million years ago, during the Carbonaceous Period, spiders, with features recognisable in some present day species, were already in existance. As soft bodies animals are not good material for fossilisation, our best early record of ancestral spiders occurs in amber (the resin of ancient forests) from some 38 million years ago, when most of the present-day families of spiders had already developed.

"While the far more imposing dinosaurs evolved - and vanished spiders have unobstrusively colonised the whole world, all except Antarctica, adapting to fill ecological niches in hundreds of thousands of micro-habitats. The most primitive sorts of trapdoor spiders have persisted, almost unchanged, over many millions of years. Modern trapdoor spiders evolved from the same ancestral stock, while, as the world climate became progressively drier, other spiders developed along different lines, becoming a second main group, the so-called true spider, with for greater mobility as hunters and web-weavers. Spiders have established themselves in environments ranging from deserts to alpine regions, from rainforest, caves and tropical river banks to woodland, seashore, pasture and suburban homes and gardens. They live in trees, under loose sheets of bark, in flowers, (exquisite lemon-yellow and apple-green midgets), among surface litter, grass tussocks, among rocks and logs. Some build homes for themselves in burrows, horizontal or vertical - some open, others closed with varied and beautifully constructed silk-hinged doors - in web nests, in curled leaves. The free rovers, crytically coloured to blend into the background as they scurry around hunting for prey, usually have some form of shelter to which they return. The trapdoor spiders are true home-builders, some 'papering' their walls with silk, using air conditioning, rubbish disposal (behind the silk curtain). Some dig tunnels over 60 cm deep to avoid heat and dessication in deserts, and use various clever devices to avoid flooding, and the entry of predators and other unwanted visitors."

Jean Edgecombe.

contributed by B. Maund.



THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER

THE CHANGING BUSH. About 10 years ago, a nature trail was established, starting at the High School and extending into the Kalimna bushland. The trail was set up by placing numbered posts at locations with good stands of particular plants. The trail has recently been checked for missing posts and plants. The changes to the bushland are quite extensive. Many locations that once had fine stands of Alpine grevillea, Grey everlasting, Bushpea, Hedge Wattle, Spreading Wattle and Parrot pea are now almost or quite devoid of these, and new stands of the plants have appeared elsewhere. Locations with mistletoe too are quite different; it has disappeared from some trees where it was formerly. Perhaps the rather extreme seasons, with some very cold and some very dry, has helped to alter the plant balance. Rather cheerfully, one area staked to indicate abundance of grass is now quite heavily shrubbed. An interesting project might be to photograph the one patch of bush each year over the years, perhaps make a movie with a frame a week, extending over twenty or more years.

BUFF-TAILED THORNBILL AT NUGGETTY. On the excursion to Nuggetty on 15 November, a nest was discovered at the base of a tree; and later identified as a Buff-tailed Thornbill's nest. This is a new area breeding record for this bird.

NEW ORCHID RECORD FOR NUGGETTY. A small stand of greenhood, the Fringed Rustyhood (Pterostylis biseta) was discovered by Rita Mills during the November excursion. This greenhood has been recorded for Castlemaine by Fred Taylor, many years ago, and was so a new orchid for most of the party. Reports of others suggest that P. biseta often grows in bare, sunbaked soil, and flowers in late spring/early summer. It may be relatively common in the district, but seldom reported because few venture into the bush when it is in flower, and few of those who do are able to see it. The Maryborough form of the orchid is quite small, growing to only about 5 cm, and almost invisible to a casual glance.

NEW EUPHORBIA RECORD FOR NUGGETTY. Another new plant for Nuggetty, the Flat Spurge (or Chamaesyce drummondii) was found by Prof. Turner, again on the evening excursion on 15 November. Flat Spurge is one of the tiny plants of the district, growing to a few centimetres, with a prostrate habit. It is easily recognisable as a member of the Euphorbia family by its typical euphorbia-like flowers.

NEW DAISY RECORD FOR MUCKLEFORD. I have made many visits to the patch of bush that was the first stopping place for the Festival excursion, and was quite surprised during the festival excursion to find a completely new daisy for the Castlemaine District growing here. It is a Brachycome with a single, rather small white daisy flower at the end of the single stalk. It is called the Weak Daisy, or Brachycome debilis.

NEW LOCATION FOR LANKY BUTTONS. One of the rarest plants in the Castlemaine district is the Lanky Buttons, or

Leptorhynchus elongatus. The only known location for many hundred of kilomtres was in Kalimna Park. A new colony has been discovered by Ian Higgins, this time in the Smith's Reef Forest.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE AT HARCOURT NORTH. In the observations for October, Crested Grebe were recorded for Harcourt North Reservoir. A new observation of five birds has been made for the same area.

ACACIA HAKEOIDES AT MUCKLEFORD. It is many years since a new wattle has been added to the district list. Acacia hakeoides is common further north, and was found in Muckleford forest by Don Franlin of the Bendigo F.N.C. Its identity has been given by the Melbourne Herbarium, with a form approaching that of the Whirrakee wattle. Its shiny green phyllodes are larger than the Whirrakee wattle, and frequently has obvious red branchlets.

SQUARE-TAILED KITE FOR MUCKLEFORD? Don Franklin of the Bendigo F.N.C. has reported that "... we saw a Square-tailed Kite circling over treetops." "It was a large kite circling on upswept wings (a very definite feature), with a tail that was square to ever so slightly forked. The tail was 'twitched' quite a bit. Chest was dull rufous color. Otherwise generally pale brown." "Use of habitat was even correct - circling over low woodland - it was in the burnt ironbark section."

OTHER NEW BIRD RECORDS FOR THE MONTH. These include

Brown Goshawk	m	Grey Shrike-thrush	h
Straw-necked Ibis	n	Crimson Rosella	h
Sacred Kingfisher	h	Black-faced cuckoo-shrike	h
Little Eagle	g		

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP. A Victorian Nature Photography Group has been formed. Its third meeting was held in the Whipstick forest during November. Next meeing is expected to be at Barmah in March. If you are interested in finding out more about the group, contact E. Perkins.

BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS will be held during 1988. Castlemaine F.N.C. will indicate an interst in holding excursions(s). Possibly they will be earlier in spring than the festival excursions. Can you suggest a suitable location?

RAINBOW BIRDS AT RED, WHITE and BLUE MINE. Rainbow birds have been reported to be nesting at the Red, White and Blue Mine at Muckleford. This is the first breeding record for this bird for our bird list.

EUTAXIA AT MUCKLEFORD. Discovery of a single low growing egg and bacon bush near the Red White and Blue mine was yet another new plant record made during the Festival Tour in early November. Eutaxia microphylla can be distinguished from the other local "egg and bacons" in that it has narrow, wiry and opposite leaves. Eutaxia occurs also near the Gower School and along the Castlemaine - Maldon road

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Excursions leave promptly at the times shown. Date, time and locality of excursions may be changed at the monthly meetings, so if not at the meeting check with a committee member.
Monthly meetings at High School, Lawson Pde. Room 309 at 8.00 p.m.

Fri 12 Dec. MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT. Bring a friend, and if possible, a short talk, or say half a dozen of your favorite slides, or tell us about something of interest to you. And bring a plate.

Sat 13 Dec. EXCURSION Leave S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30 . The area visted will be arranged at the meeting. Possibly to Daylesford district.

Thurs 22nd Jan. BUSINESS MEETING.

Fri 13 Feb. BIRDS. Speaker will be Mr Russell Palmer, of Mildura F.N.C. This is the annual meeting and is the first general meeting for the year.

Sat 14 Feb. EXCURSION. Leave S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30.

Frid 14 Oct EUROPE AND AMERICA with Mr G. Barry.

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CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC. BOX 324 CASTLEMAINE.

COMMITTEE Ern Perkins(Pres), Barabara Maund(Sec), Geoff Sitch(Treas), Maggie Oliver(Vice Pres), Kaye Turner(Exc. sec), George Broadway(Libr), Rita Mills(Newsletter), Gunter Liebl, Margaret Dunne, Elma Kelly, Jack Dare(I/P Pres), Berri Perry.

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Articles for the magazine can be left at Tonks Hardware.
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Subscriptions for 1986 are

Pensioner/student	$3	Single	$5
Family	$8	Supporting	$12

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The Committee is planning for next years activities. Have you a suggestion for a program? What kinds of program? Have you suggestions for an excursion? Have you a favourite spot that you would be willing to show others?
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Some excursions are arranged at short notice. These include summer evening excursions with a picnic tea. If you would like to be informed of these excursions please let the Secretary know.