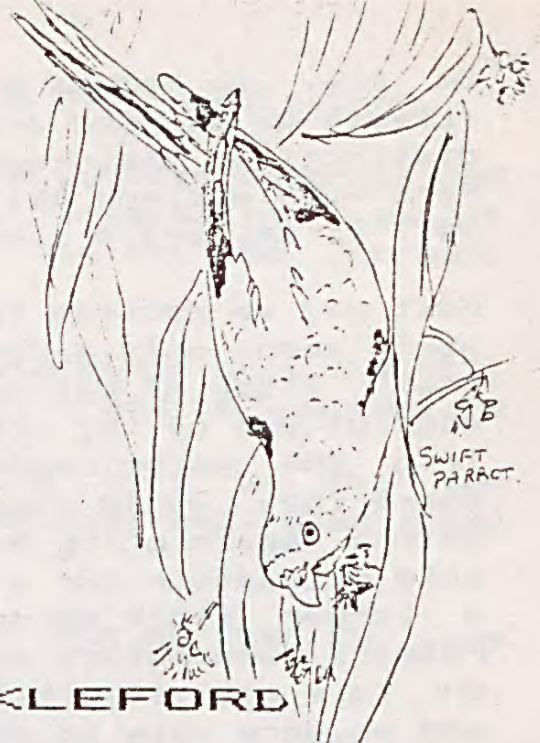


CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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SWIFT PARROTS AT MUCKLEFORD

When the Red Ironbarks are in flower, the Red, White and Blue Mine in Muckleford Forest is a most rewarding place to go birdwatching.

There must be many thousand Red Wattlebirds in the Muckleford Forest, and when we went there last weekend their raucous call could be heard in all directions; it seemed as if every Ironbark had a resident population of one or two of these birds, as well as one or two White-naped Honeyeaters. In addition to the resident White-naped Honeyeaters, flocks numbering several hundred could be seen, flying in swarms from tree to tree. It was interesting to watch the baffled rage of the Wattlebirds as they were quite ineffective in repelling these invaders. The beautiful Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters were also in abundance, and we were lucky enough to have some close to us in full view.

This Saturday we decided to visit the Mine again. This time we did not see the large swarms of White-naped Honeyeaters, although they, and the Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters were very common throughout the Ironbark areas. Lorikeets were still abundant too. Musk Lorikeets seemed to be most common and we also saw some Purple-crowned Lorikeets and a few Little Lorikeets.

We sat for a while at the Red White and Blue Mine, and low down in a near by Ironbark we saw a parrot-like bird feeding, which we identified as a Swift Parrot - a new sighting for all of the party. Its colours are rather like those of a lorikeet, but the tail is quite different, being much longer and a brownish colour. It obligingly came out on a low exposed branch so that we could examine it at leisure, and compare it with the book illustrations. The only other record of the Swift Parrot for this area is from Gunter Leibl, again for Muckleford Forest.

While watching the parrot, a pair of Hooded Robins began feeding nearby. The male Hooded Robin is a most handsome bird, and we had ample chance to admire him and his spouse.

On the way home a pair of birds were seen in part of the open forest; we stopped and again were able to see the birds' distinctive features; a black crest on the head, and a white face with a black bill. Without doubt we had a pair of Crested Bell Birds, again a new bird for all of us.

Next day we decided to make another visit. The Swift Parrot was again seen, only a few metres from the previous sighting. A small flock of White-naped Honeyeaters was seen perched on the edge of one of the old pieces of machinery. They were flying into the water caught in its base, and then back to the perch where they would vigorously shiver, and shake their feathers before again going back to the water. It seemed to be a rather cold occupation for a winter's day. A little further on we saw a larger flock doing a similar thing, and this time joined by Fuscous Honeyeaters and Silver Eyes. The birds were so intent on this activity that they seemed to be oblivious of onlookers and we were able to get within a few metres of them.

To finish a the weekend's bird watching, a male Hooded Robin started feeding nearby and we were again able to admire him.

E.P. 20/7/1986

EXCURSION TO COLIBAN FALLS

The Bendigo F.N.C. is having an excursion to Coliban Falls. This is an extract from their newsletter.

DATE Sunday August 17

ACTIVITY Easy bushwalk along the Coliban River

LEADER John Lindner (Bendigo F.N.C.)

MEETING TIME AND PLACE 9.00 outside Jack and Jean Ipsen's place, 'Lyall Glen', on the Eppalock-Redesdale Road. We will then drive to the start of the walk, leaving enough cars at the finishing point (Gibbon's Bridge over the Coliban R.) to transport the drivers back to the cars left at the starting point.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WALK Start at the bridge over Granite Ck., a tributary of the Coliban R. Walk 4.5 km along Granite Ck. to the river, passing two delightful waterfalls in the granite. Terrain - open grazing country, with a few rough patches. Morning tea or snack along the way, probably at the first waterfall.

Lunch just below Coliban Falls. Explore Coliban Falls. Note that the falls area is very rugged, with moss covered rocks that are quite treacherous when wet. However, you do not HAVE to clamber over the rocks; that is optional.

Continue down the Coliban River 5 km to Gibbons Bridge. Terrain - open grazing country with a few rough patches.

TOTAL DISTANCE 10 km approx. 10.00 a.m to 4.00 p.m. approx.

ATTRACTIONS Rolling granite country with boulder outcrops and huge River Red Gums. Basalt residuals. Interesting remnant flora along the streams (e.g. Tree Violet, Rock Correa). Pothole formations at Coliban Falls.

WHAT TO BRING AND WEAR. Warm clothes. Waterproof coat and hat. Strong shoes and boots, with plenty of tread if you want to explore the falls. (Not Gumboots). Day pack for lunch and snacks etc. A fire will be lit for lunch to make billy tea and cook sausages etc. Camera and binoculars.

WEATHER The walk will go ahead, except if the weather is very bad indeed.

ITEMS FROM WHIRRAKEE JUL 1986

Interesting bird sightings Nov 85 - June 86 include

REGENT HONEYEATERS were reported from the street Ironbarks
DOLLARBIRD was recorded at Eddington.
OLIVE BACKED ORIOLE from Lyall Glen
GREAT CRESTED GREBE at Tallaroop Reservoir
WHITE-THROATED NIGHTJAR in Bendigo area
BLACK HONEYEATERS About 10, from near Inglewood
WHITE FRONTED HONEYEATERS About 100, again from near Inglewood
LEADEN FLYCATCHER from the Whipstick
PURPLE GAPPED HONEYEATERS Five seen in the Whipstick.
GLOSSY IBIS A pair at May Swamp
WHITE-BROWED BABBLERS at Lyall Glen after 25 years absence.
BLUE-WINGED PARROTS at Inglewood
GREY-CROWNED BABBLERS Castlemaine Golf Course (March 1986)
FORK-TAILED KITE at Rochester and Eaglehawk
SPOTTED HARRIER at Sutton Grange on 17 Jan

from "The Australian Garden Journal", Jan '86

"An amino acid compound common in most plants and animals has been isolated at the University of Illinois. In plants this material makes light-sensitive compounds; if applied at night, higher than normal levels of these compounds are made, and when the plants are subjected to daylight they over-react and stop growing; death can occur in anything from 30 minutes to several days. This promises to lead to the development of a new type of herbicide."

from Barbara Maund

From Major Mitchell's Journal, Vol. 2. published 1839.
This is the journal of his 1836 expedition.

this rivulet at length entered a still deeper valley in which there was very little wood, the hills on the opposite side being uncommonly level at the top. In this valley, a fine stream ran northward, being undoubtedly the Barnard, or first river crossed by us on our way to Mount Macedon. We succeeded in finding a ford, but although it was deep, a greater difficulty to be overcome was the descent of our carts to it, so abrupt and steep-sided was the ravine in which the Barnard flowed. When we had effected, at length, a descent and a passage across, having also established our camp beyond this stream, I rode up the bank towards a noise of falling water, and thus came to a very fine cascade of upwards of sixty feet. The river indeed fell more than double that height, but in the lower part, the water escaped unseen, flowing amongst large blocks of granite. I had visited several waterfalls in Scotland, but this was certainly the most picturesque I had witnessed; although the effect was not so much in the body of water falling, or the loud noise, as in the bold character of the rocks over and amongst which it fell. Their colour and shape were harmonized into a more complete scene than nature usually presents, resembling the "finished subject" of an artist, foreground and all. The prevailing hues were light red and purple-grey, the rocks being finely interlaced with a small-leaved creeper of the brightest green. A dark coloured moss, which presents a warm green in the sun, covered the lower masses, and relieved and supported the brighter hues, while a brilliant iris shone steadily in the spray, and blended into perfect harmony the lighter hues of the higher rocks, and the whiteness of the torrent rushing over them. The banks of this stream were of so bold a character, that in all probability other picturesque scenery, perhaps finer than this, may yet be found upon it. The geological character of the adjacent country was sufficiently striking,—the left bank consisted of undulating hills and bold rocks of granite; the right of trap-rock in the higher part, and presented a remarkable contrast to the other,



Woodcut by J. H. Rogers

Published by J. H. Rogers

Albany, N. Y. 1850

FALL OF COBAW.

Published by J. H. Rogers

REPORTS FOR JULY

BASKET FUNGUS was shown at the July meeting, and was found, in stony and rocky ground at Castlemaine High School by Don Walker. Apparently flies spread the spores; the spores are eaten, and then pass through the body of the fly. It was suggested that basket fungi can be kept in shape by blowing a balloon up inside the basket. Let the balloon down when the fungus has dried.

OTHER FUNGI were also on display, including one attached to a piece of wood.

AUSTRALITES were shown by Murray Hodges, from the Colac Field Naturalists. Also known as 'Blackfellow Buttons', they were found in the Otways at Kennedy's Creek and Simpsons Road. A good time to look for them is after rain when the sand is washed from them. They are believed to be meteorites, and that the heat caused by the material passing through the atmosphere resulted in the formation of obsidian (a kind of naturally occurring black glass.)

WATTLES IN FLOWER. Frank Blake showed specimens of wattle in flower, all collected from Kaweka. These included *Acacia flexifolia* (or Bent-leaf Wattle) from the Whipstick and Rushworth area, *Acacia lanigera* (or Woolly Wattle) which grows around Mandurang and in Fryers Ridge, and a specimen thought to be *Acacia verniciflua* (or Varnish Wattle). This specimen had an unusual leaf form and was possibly a hybrid.

CIGARETTE PLANT (or Cupea) was shown by Harold Pollock. Spinebills and other honeyeaters were feeding on it in his garden.

SPINEBILLS AT GUILDFORD Berri Perry observed Eastern Spinebills feeding in her garden at Guildford. This is the first sighting of them here over many years.

COOTAMUNDRA IN FLOWER. Earliest report of 1986 flowering in this district was for Kaweka St for the last week of July.

SPREADING WATTLE A bright yellow flowering form of Spreading Wattle (*Acacia genistifolia*) was observed by Rita Mills in the bush at Castlemaine North. It appeared to be similar to the usual Spreading Wattle, but had bright yellow flowers, it was also flowering slightly later than the usual specimens.

NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

BIRD LIST has been revised in readiness for Edition 3. In addition to many extra records, Laanacoorie Reservoir and Lyal Glen have been included. Mr J. Ipsen of Lyal Glen has sent a list of species observed since 1959. Included in his list are Pea-fowl, Dollar Bird, Little Cuckoo-shrike, Gilbert Whistler, Leaden Flycatcher, Spotted Quail-thrush, Regent Honeyeater and Grey Butcher-bird.

REGISTER OF INTERESTING TREES. The Club is continuing to collect lists of significant trees. Photographs will also be sought.

Margaret Dunne and Ern Perkins

FOREST RED GUM IN INDIA

In Karnataka state (India) wood has become a cash crop. Farmers in social forestry schemes plant trees that will produce the most timber in the shortest time. This means that few species other than the fast growing exotic *Eucalyptus tereticornis* have been planted.

Environmentalists are worried. A recent report says that the spread of *Eucalyptus* on rainfed land is nothing but "an unscientific prescription for desertification". The eucalypts were introduced into India in the 19th century. Since then, foresters have tried 170 species in India, and planted five on a large scale. More recently, *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, widely known as eucalyptus hybrid or Mysore gum [and Forest Red Gum in Australia] has become the most popular choice for tree-planting schemes.

The tree originated along the eastern coast of Australia. It needs around 1200 millimetres of rain each year. In large parts of Karnataka, less than 800 mm of rain falls each year. The tree survives there by developing a massive root system, just below the surface of the soil, to extract all available moisture. The competition for scarce moisture not only stops undergrowth developing, but also prevents groundwater from being replenished. The species needs a lot of nutrients, but drops few dead leaves to return them to the soil. Coppicing the trees for maximum yield makes huge demands on the land.

The tree may impoverish the soil even more. Its roots or leaves exude a poison that stops other plants from germinating and kills soil organisms which should play a vital role in improving the soil's fertility and maintaining its structure. Earthworms are scarce in eucalyptus plantations. The less the rainfall the more toxic the eucalyptus's products, because there is less rain to wash them out of the soil.

Eucalyptus has become a lucrative cash crop for richer farmers, who have land to set aside and who can afford to wait for the returns. Poor people see fewer benefits. *Eucalyptus* plantations put farm labourers out of a job; a crop of trees needs far less labour than a crop of grain.

In some areas, plantations of eucalypts have taken over what used to be called public 'wastelands'. No one disputes the need to replant trees in these areas, which are the only remaining source of fuelwood, fodder, organic fertiliser and other basic needs of poor people. Commercial forestry, however, deprives them of this resource. The farmers' own response is significant. Small farmers have dug trenches around their fields to isolate them from the effects of the neighbouring plantations of *Eucalyptus tereticornis*. With the support of the local farmers union, they have uprooted millions of seedlings planted on government land and in state-run nurseries, inserting tamarind and mango seeds in their place.

[Condensed from 'How aid spreads poverty', M. Hall and S. Percy, in *New Scientist*, 26 June, 1986]

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 8th Aug. KINGDOM OF THE LYREBIRD. Outstanding documentary. Video of the colour film by Laslo and Jenny Erdos. 8.00 p.m at the High School.

Sat 9th Aug. WATTLE FLAT ORCHIDS. Meet 1.30 at SEC, Mostyn St

Sun 17th Aug. COLIBAN FALLS WALK. Meet at 8.15 a.m. at 27 Doveton St., Castlemaine. See separate notice for more about the excursion.

Thurs 28th Aug. BUSINESS MEETING this month will be at 7.30 p.m. at 27 Doveton St. All members are invited.

Fri 12th Sept. BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA with Dr Pat Bingham. 8.00 p.m at High School.

Sat 13th Sept. SMITH'S REEF WILDFLOWERS AND BIRDS. Meet S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30 p.m.

Sun 21th Sept LYAL GLEN. Excursion to Ipsen's, Lyal Glen with Bird Observers Club.. Details next newsletter.

Sat 27th Sept. BENDIGO WHIPSTICK. We join the Bird Observers Club campout at the Whipstick for the day. Meet 27 Doveton St at 8.30 a.m.

Sat 4th Oct. DRUMMOND. All day walk to in the Drummond area. Leave at 9.15 a.m.; choice of an all day walk or bird watching near the start/finish area.

Fri 10th Oct. GALAPAGOS and INCA RUINS with John Zwar.

Sat 11th Oct. TARADALE BUSHLAND. Wildflowers and birds. Leave SEC at 1.30. Leader is Mrs R. Mills.

Sun 12 Oct. SALOMON GULLY & JACKASS FLAT with Bendigo and Maryborough F.N.C. Leave SEC at 9.25 or Salomon Gully at 10.00. Picnic lunch.

Fri-Sun 17-19 Oct MARYBOROUGH CAMPOUT with W.V.F.N.C.A. Dr Jim Willis will be speaker.

Sat 1 & 8th Nov MUCKLEFORD FOREST. Festival excursions, leave Railway Goods Sheds, Kennedy St at 1.30.

Fri 14 Nov. FLINDERS RANGES with G. Leibl.

Fri 12 Dec. MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT.

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC. BOX 324 CASTLEMAINE.