

# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS  
CLUB INC. P.O Box 324.



## A GLAD AND SAD TALE

This is another of my 'Spots Recommended for a Few Days Holiday' stories. I think I have already recommended a visit to Moyston, between Ararat and Mount William. There isn't any accommodation at Moyston itself, but it is only 9 or 10 miles from Ararat. I went over there to stay with my daughter during the last week of September, and we went out to their favourite spot on the 'rubbish tip road'. It is about a kilometer past the turn off to the Lip on the gravel road which leaves the main road about 300 m north of the Post Office.

We stopped first on the side of road, and went into the bush from there, taking a picnic lunch with us. There were dozens of leopard orchids where we stopped, along with two different species of Hibbertia (Guinea Flower), lots of Tetratheca, wattles, peas, Running Postman, and as we got further in toward the low lying ground, thousands upon thousands of large Yellow Stars.

After lunch we went down to the 'special spot' which is on a track which turns off to the right, just before the paddocks start again. It looked OK so I decided to risk it, but take care. One spot we drove through was a bit soft, but I kept moving and all was well. About 1½ km in we came to a spot that didn't look very safe, and I decided not to try to get through, but stopped just on the edge of the track, and we walked the kilometer or so to the special patch. All the way there were the plants we'd seen before, plus a very beautiful vermillion and yellow grevillia, squills, beard heath, correa (though that had almost finished flowering) more Wax lip orchids, and a lovely patch of Wallflower orchids.

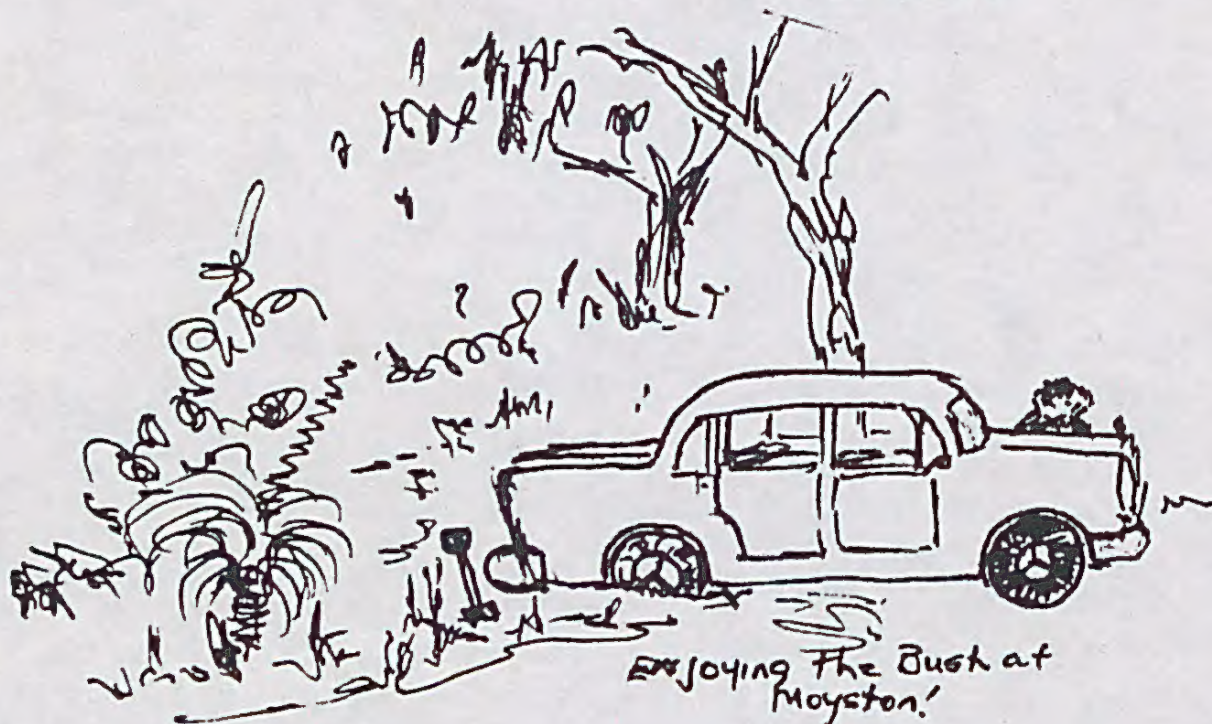
The orchids we hoped to find were not out yet, so we headed back to the car and a welcome cuppa.

Then came the sad part! Instead of mistrusting the sides of the track, I gave a little bounce on the ground, decided it was OK, and, instead of using my common sense and backing back down the road, I decided to risk turning

there. Now, Moyston, as I said, is not very far from the Grampians, and has that lovely sandy/gravelly soil which acts like a sponge. The first time I backed and came forward again all was well, the second time, when I was at right angles to the road, the back wheel just 'shloomed' down to the axle! I congratulated myself on always carrying a shovel, and set to work to dig out in front of the wheel, and lay sticks across in the approved manner. I got forward about 4 or 5 inches, and that was that! The next step (lots of them!) was a 4 mile walk back to Moyston, but we were rescued by a fellow who is quite a dab hand at getting people out of bogs around Moyston.

It was all worth it, though. I know of very few patches of bush to surpass this one. There's even the bonus of kangaroos, emus, echidnas, goannas and koalas, as well as a wealth of birds.

Rita Mills



#### Some Native Animals at Barkers Creek

Forester Kangaroo

Swamp Wallaby

Brushtail Possum

Ringtail Possum

Sugar Glider

Brushtailed Phascogale

Koala

Echidna

Bush Rat

Brown snake

Stumpytailed Lizard

Bat

Bluetongue Lizard

Skink

Other lizards, names not known, various frogs and toads.

from Wyn Palmer

## NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

WATTLES AND WILDFLOWERS Observations indicate that this will be a showy spring. After a poor season in 1985, the wattles and waxflowers in particular are making a fine display.

FLAT-LEAF BUSH-PEA This is a rather uncommon bush-pea, and is found in this district on the Nuggetty Ranges. Observations show that it is less common now than a few years ago, and only rather old plants can now be found, growing among granite boulders. This suggests that grazing (by rabbits?) is responsible for its decline. The Committee has written to the Dept of Forests and Lands, suggesting that portion of Nuggetty be fenced.

RIVER BOTTLEBRUSH has been found by Rita Mills, growing among Ironbarks at Barkers Creek. This is a quite unusual habitat; they are usually to be found along along rivers, often growing in the water.

BLUE-FACED HONEYEATER was seen by Club members at the B.O.C. excursion to Lyall Glen.

ORCHIDS AT SANDON FOREST Mr Harry Barclay (Creswick F.N.C.) has recorded the following orchids at the Sandon Forest.

- +Pterostylis nana (Dwarf Greenhood)
- +Pterostylis nutans (Nodding Greenhood)
- Pterostylis longifolia (Tall Greenhood)
- +Pterostylis curta (Blunt Greenhood)
- +Pterostylis robusta (Large Striped Greenhood)
- +Acianthus reniformis (Mosquito Orchid)
- +Acianthus exsertus (Gnat Orchid)
- +Diuris maculata (Leopard Orchid)

The + against the name indicates that it is a new record for the Castlemaine Plant List.

NEW BIRD RECORDS FOR SMITHS REEF These were recorded at the Club's excursion to Smiths Reef in September

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Buff-tailed Thornbill    | Striated Pardalote      |
| White-eared Honeyeater   | Yellow-faced Honeyeater |
| Horsefield Bronze Cuckoo | Red-browed Firetail     |
| Oriole                   | Brown Thornbill         |

PIED CURRAWONGS have been visiting gardens in the central township this year. They are not an unusual sighting in winter, but usually they are on the outskirts of the town.

WHITE HARDENBERGIA AT CASTLEMAINE SOUTH A Hardenbergia with pure-white flowers has been found in the forest to the south of Castlemaine. The white flowered form is growing among plants with the more usual purple colored flowers.

WOOLLY GREVILLEA An unusual grevillea was found at the Club's excursion to Smith's Reef. It differed from the more usual Mountain Grevillea in having sharper, narrower leaves, and also in the hairiness of the flower parts. It was probably a hybrid between Grevillea alpina and the Rosemary Grevillea.

## Smiths Reef Excursion

Those who joined the excursion on the 13th September were delighted at the number and variety of plants in flower, including hundreds of thousands of Early Nancies at the first stop. I have only listed the plants which were in flower on the day, and many more were in bud. Only one Wax-lip was found, but there were dozens of buds.

*Pterostylus nutans*

*P. nana*

*P. longifolia*

*Diurus maculata*

*D. pedunculata*

*Glossodia major*

*Tetratheca ciliata*

*Anguillarinea dioica*

*Leucopogon virgatus*

*Ranunculus* sp.

*Davisia ulicifolia*

*Grevillia alpine*

*Acacia acinacia*

*A. pycnantha*

*A. aspera*

*Hibbertia exutiacies*

*Lazulia* sp

*Eriostemon verrucosus*

*Platylobium formosum*

*Rhytidosperrum*(?) *procumbens*

*Hovea heterophylla*

*Astrolooma conostephioides*

*Pimelea linifolia*

*Hakea sericea*

*Microseris scapigera*

*Drosera whitterakerii*

*Acacia gunii*

*Caledonia cerulea*

*C. carnea*

*Millotia tenuifolia*

*Plantago varia*

*Hardenbergia violacea*

*Crassula decumbens*

*C. seiberana*

*Brachycome perpusilla*

Nodding greenhood

Dwarf Greenhood

Tall Greenhood

Leopard orchid

Golden Moths, Snake orchid,

Cowslip orchid, or Nanny  
Goats

Wax-lip orchid

Pink Bells

Early Nancy

Common Beard-heath

Buttercup

Gorse Bitter-pea, Egg  
and Bacon

*Grevillia*

Gold-dust Wattle

Golden Wattle

Rough Wattle

Guinea-flower

Field-rush

Fairy Wax-flower

Handsome Flat-pea

Sweet Marianth

Hovea

Flame Heath (just one  
patch of 10-15 plants)

Slender Rice-flower

Silky Hakea

Yam-daisy

Scented Sundew

Ploughshare Wattle

Blue *Caledonia*

Pink Fingers

Soft *Millotia*

Variable Plantain

False *Sarsparilla* ( this  
plant was cyclamen  
in colour)

Rayless Daisy

Rita Mills

from "Habitat", Feb. 1982

## About Drought in Australia

Records show that there is no regular pattern to the incidence of droughts, the areas affected, or their duration. However, as a useful assessment of drought occurrence, an analysis of statistics indicates that:-

- \* The continent should be completely free of drought in 22 out of 100 years.
- \* It is unlikely that more than 50% of the continent will be drought stricken in any one year.
- \* The frequency of completely drought-free conditions range from 46 in 100 years in Western Australia, to 73 years in Tasmania. The figures for the other states are - Northern Territory, 65, South Australia, 56; Queensland, 49; New South Wales, 53; and Victoria, 59.

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## Also on Drought in Australia

This is an extract from "Two Expeditions into Southern Australia, 1828-31" by Captain Charles Sturt, published in 1833.

"The most serious disadvantage under which the colony of New South Wales labours, is in the drought to which it is periodically subject. Its climate may be said to be too dry; in other respects it is one of the most delightful under heaven; and experience of the certainty of the recurrence of the trying seasons to which I allude, should teach men to provide against their effects. Those seasons, during which no rain falls, appear, from the observations of former writers, to occur every ten or twelve years; and it is somewhat singular that no cause has been assigned for such periodical visitations. Whether the state of the interior has anything to do with them, and whether the wet or dry condition of the marshes at all regulate the seasons, is a question upon which I will not venture to give any decisive opinion. But most assuredly, when the interior is dry, the seasons are dry, and vice-versa. Indeed, not only is this the case, but rains from excessive duration in the first year after a drought, decrease gradually year after year, until they wholly cease for a time. It seems not improbable, therefore, that the state of the interior does, in some measure, regulate the fall of rain upon the eastern ranges, which appears to decrease in quantity yearly as the marshes become exhausted, and cease altogether, when they contain no water....."

It is interesting that scientists now are speculating that the oceans, not the inland, might hold the key to drought, as it is found that during drought times the ocean temperatures seem to have a definite pattern of temperatures. It will be interesting to find if they can prove their theory.

Barbara Maund  
Rita Mills

From Major Mitchell's Journal, Vol 2, 1836.  
Mt Byng is now Mt Alexander.

Pursuing the connection between them and the still higher summits on the north-east, I came at length upon an open valley enclosed by hills very lightly wooded. This change was evidently owing to a difference in the rock, which was a fine grained granite, whereas the hills we had recently crossed, belonged chiefly to the volcanic class of rocks, with the exception of the range I had traversed that evening in my way from the camp, which consisted of ferruginous sandstone. With the change of rock, a difference was also obvious in the shape of the hills, the quantity and quality of the water, and the character of the trees. The hills presented a bold sweeping outline, and were no longer broken by sharp-edged strata, but crowned with large round masses of rock. Running water was gushing from every hollow in much greater abundance than elsewhere; and, lastly, the timber, which on the other ranges, consisted chiefly of iron-bark and stringy-bark, now presented the shining bark of the blue-gum or yarra, and the grey hue of the box. The *anthistiria australis*, a grass which seems to delight in a granitic soil, also appeared in great abundance, and we also found the aromatic tea, *Tasmania aromatica*, which represents in New Holland, the Winter's bark of the southern extremity of South America. The leaves and bark of this tree have a hot biting cinnamon-like taste, on which account it is vulgarly called the pepper-tree. I could ride with ease to the summit of the friendly hill, that I had seen from afar, and found it but thinly wooded, so that I could take my angles around the horizon without difficulty. Again reminded by the similar aspect this region presented, of the lower Pyrenees and the pass of Orbaicetta, I named the summit Mount Byng. A country fully as promising as the fine region we had left, was embraced in my view from that point. I perceived long patches of open plain, interspersed with forest hills and low woody ranges, among which I could trace out a good line of route for another fifty miles homewards. The highest of the mountains lay to the south, and evidently belonged to the coast range, if it might be so called; and on that side, a lofty mass arose above the rest, and promised a view towards the sea; that height being distant from the hill on which I stood, about thirty miles. A

broad chain of woody hills connected the coast range with Mount Byng, and I could trace the general course of several important streams through the country to the east of it. Northward, I saw a little of the interior plains, and the points where the various ranges terminated upon them. The sun was setting, when I left Mount Byng, but I depended on one of our natives, Tommy Came-last, who was then with me, for finding our way to the camp; and who, on such occasions, could trace my steps backwards, with wonderful facility by day or night.

Book Review. From I.F.F.A. (Indigenous Flora & Fauna Association) Indigenotes.

Jessop, J.P. and Toelken, H.R. eds. (1986). Flora of South Australia. Parts 1-4, Governments Printer, Adelaide. (Hardback) RRP: \$140.00 for the 4 parts bound together, or \$31.00-\$41.00 for each part.

An exciting new flora has hit the street and it is glowingly recommended. This new flora is only loosely based on Black's classic Flora of South Australia, being extensively refurbished with a new format, enlarged amended descriptions and wholly new line drawings of mostly good to excellent quality. It also has 16 color plates per volume by Colin Woolcock. The most notable feature is the large number of new taxa described by the authors of the various families or genera treated. A substantial proportion of these also occur in Victoria, and many have been known by us for some time e.g. *Goodenia* sp. A (in the sense of Beaglehole) is now *G. blackiana* Carolin and can now be formally added to the Victorian and Melbourne lists.

The four parts of the flora deal respectively with plant families Lycopodiaceae - Rosaceae (Part 1); Leguminosae - Rubiaceae (Part 2); Polemoniaceae - Compositae (Part 3) and Monocotyledons (Part 4). Various specialists throughout Australia have authored different families or genera so we may expect definitive up-to-date taxonomy (But don't blink for too long).

This new flora of unexcelled quality for a state or region is warmly welcomed. It throws into stark context the plight of the Victorian botanical community in its lack of a flora. Willis' handbooks have served us well, but they are no more than keys to the flora and are now out of date. Hundreds of species have been added to the flora, and taxonomic concepts in many groups have altered radically, necessitating the routine use of taxonomic accounts dispersed in a wide array of journals. This new Flora of South Australia will find a sizeable group of adherents (particularly those working with the western Victorian flora) frustrated by the lack of comparable literature in this state.

B.O.C. EXCURSION - Crosbie State Forest (Heathcote district), led by Pat Bingham. SUNDAY OCT 26th.

Contact K. Turner or E. Perkins for travel details.

## 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 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 12th 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.

Wed 15th Oct KALIMNA PARK. Meet High School Car Park (at end of bitumen, Lawson Pde) at 4.15. Leader G. Braodway/E. Perkins.

Fri-Sun 17-19 Oct MARYBOROUGH CAMPOUT with W.V.F.N.C.A. All meetings will be at the M.F.N.C. Clubhouse, Timor Rd (Dundas Rd). Excursions also leave from here.

- Fri 17 Oct The late Edgar Prescott's Lantern Slides of Australian Orchids and forestry activities of that era.

- Sat 18 Oct at 9.00 a.m. Tour taking in Aboriginal Wells & Aboriginal Initiation Grounds.

- Sat 18 Oct 1.30 p.m. Botany Excursion Paddy's Ranges State Park at Maryborough.

- Sat 18 Oct 6.30 p.m. Annual meeting of W.V.F.N.C.A., and launching by Doreen Nason, of Cliff Beaglehole's Murray Valley Report.

- Sat 18 Oct at 8.00 p.m. Jim Willis will be guest speaker - topic is "The natural history of Australia's offshore islands".

- Sun 19 Oct 9.00 a.m. Bird excursion.

- Sun 19 Oct 9.00 a.m. Relics of the Golden Age and present mining activities.

Buses will be available for the two Saturday excursions if there is enough interest. Cost \$12 for the day. Book by Oct 12 at Box 62, Maryborough or 'phone 612249.

Wed 22nd Oct CASTLEMAINE NORTH. Meet 118 Blakely Rd at 4.15. Leader is R. Mills

Wed 29th Oct SMITHS REEF to see lilies etc on burned areas. Meet Gower School at 4.15.

Sat 1 Nov MUCKLEFORD FOREST. Festival excursion, leave Railway Goods Sheds, Kennedy St at 1.30.

Sat 8 Nov MUCKLEFORD FOREST. Festival excursion, leave Railway Goods Sheds, Kennedy St at 1.30.

Fri 14 Nov. FLINDERS RANGES with G. Leibl. 8.00 p.m. at High School.

Fri 12 Dec. MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT.