

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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Meetings are held at the High School, Blakely Road at 8 p.m. on the second Friday of the month.

Business meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month, usually at 38 Campbell St. All members are invited to attend Business meetings.

Visitors and people interested in Natural History are invited to attend club functions.

Pres: Mr J. Dare
Sec; Mrs B. Perry
Treas: Mr S. Bruton
Act N/L E. Perkins.

YELLOW GUM
Pyrenees Hwy,
Muckleford.

THE MONTH AT CAMPBELLS CREEK

The dry spell has not helped the display of wildflowers although some early flowering types have managed to make a good display, notably the Bendigo Wax and Rice Flowers. Especially pleasing is the apparent increase in the Bendigo Wax, probably because the area is untouched by any form of animal including the two-legged kind. The numerous small Chocolate Lily plants seemed to have been decimated by the dry but the Tetratheca is putting on a brave show. Another first for me was the discovery of two Leopard Orchids and several Pink Fingers.

Sept 15 saw the first appearance of our young Blue-tongue Lizard, even accepting some minced steak; our Jacky Jacky was sunning himself, although looking rather thin. Our Grey Thrush continues to give his glorious recitals each day so gets our vote for the number one songster, and the most monotonous and mournful goes at this time to the Pallid Cuckoo. Two White-faced Herons have been feeding down in the paddock for several weeks - very nervous birds taking off at the sight of a human. Honeyeaters are still using a bottle of syrup in less than two days but suspect that the many young Yellow-faced Honeyeaters are the main reason. A real fight has developed over the occupancy of the five nesting logs; there seems to be over twenty Rosellas, both Eastern and Crimson, competing with each other.

Terry Collins |

GOWER EXCURSION

Our first afternoon excursion for Spring, Wednesday 18th September was not exactly a typical Spring day - or maybe it was - heavily overcast skies and a chilly blustering wind!

However it did not deter seven enthusiasts from turning up to seek out the early arrivals.

We tracked along beyond the old Gower School, where the leader had hoped to check on a very large eagles nest, but the navigation failed so we didn't find it.

Up and over a high rocky ridge we stopped by a large rock wall. There were many clumps of Greenhoods, the Tall, Nodding and Dwarf; Tetratheca, Early Nancy, Yellow Star,

Yam Daisy, Pink Fingers, Blue Caladenia, Leopard Orchid and what appeared to be a Leopard Orchid minus spots! The *Grevillea alpina* was well out.

The birds were rather quiet, except for quite a number of Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes, and Black-faced wood-swallows, and then, the great moment of the outing, nonchalantly hopping across the road was a Crested Bell Bird. Three of us who had arrived early were thrilled by this sighting, and shortly after he disappeared we heard the familiar tinkling call.

M. Oliver

Rare Find at Melville Caves



I was recently handed a margarine container with a treasure that Stan Bruton had brought home from the Campout at Melville Caves in it. It was a Morel, a quite rare fungus in Australia, though the Koorooya area is a good place to find them..

They are unusual in that the spores are carried in microscopic sacs (asci) on the outside of the fruiting body, and not in gills or pores, and thus belong to the group 'ascomycetes' or sack fungi, to which the bread moulds and cup fungi belong.

The cap is actually a convoluted cup, conical in shape, dark olive-brown in colour, with more or less longitudinal ribs joined irregularly by cross pieces, making deep pits. Both the cap and the stem are hollow. They can grow to a height of 10 cm.

They are said to be excellent eating, and the hollow cap makes them excellent for stuffing. The one Stan sent was a little old and hard, so I haven't tried it out!

Rita Mills

MELVILLE CAVES EXCURSION

EXCURSION TO KOYOORA STATE PARK, SATURDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER, 1985

Instead of our usual Saturday afternoon excursion following our September meeting, we had arranged to meet the Ballarat Field Naturalists Club at Melville Caves, where they were camping for the week-end

As we entered the recently proclaimed Koyoorah State Park, we were thrilled with the beauty of the wattle blossom, especially the lovely, almost spherical bushes of Wallowa Wattle (*A. calamifolia*), which seemed to fill the eucalypt forest with sunshine.

When we four, Joan, Beth, Frank Duffin and myself arrived, on the tick of 10.30 at the picturesque camp site, the Turners, Barbara and our popular speaker of the previous evening, Dr. Jim Willis, had already found the billy boiling. We greeted old friends and met new ones to the accompaniment of an orchestra of bird calls, ranging from White Cockatoos to the Striated Pardalotes, unseen in the big Blakelys Red Gums above us.

While gazing up towards the big granite boulders, trying to locate a very vocal Horsefield Bronze-Cuckoo, we saw a sleek falcon soaring in big circles, obviously using the updraught caused by the small mountain that towered above us. The exciting thing about the birds performance was the way it almost closed its wings and dropped like a bullet for maybe 30 metres, then resumed its serene gliding pattern again. Was it a Peregrine Falcon? A juvenile perhaps, rehearsing its deadly attack-dive, while enjoying the glorious morning.

Leaving the identification problem "up in the air" we all drove up to a grassy picnic area close to the rocky summit. Parking the cars, we mostly headed for the look-out, with the bird watchers wandering off for a closer look at several Spiny-cheeked Honey-eaters, while Dr Willis and our Prof. Turner each went off in different directions, botanising and photographing.

I found the directional plaque on the huge granite boulder a most interesting feature of the park. With such points as Mt Alexander, Beckworth, Mt Tarrengower, Bealiba, Koorong, Kooyora (4 km north) and Pyramid Hill all clearly identified. I felt that I was getting to know the area.

That great heap of boulders is, I understand, Melville Caves, though the nearest thing to caves I saw were weathered holes in the boulders, big enough to crouch in, and one long enough for three children to wriggle into, out of sight. Not yet having read the article in the Castlemaine Naturalist (September issue) I do not know that the same tribe of Aborigines that roamed the hills and valleys of Castlemaine area, the Jajowerongs, had also lived in the Koyora area for untold centuries before being dispossessed by our forebears.

After a pleasant lunch together near the cars, with much interesting conversation, we moved off again in convoy a short distance, to a car park-right down in the bush. This

was the starting (and finishing) point of "an easy three hour walk".

While John settled by a nearby rock-hole with his camera and sketch pad, most of us kept close to Jim Willis. He had the only plant list for the park, and quite early in the afternoon was heard to say that he had already added six species to it. He enthusiastically made known to us such mysteries as the names of the niny plants growing in shallow soil on the huge flat rocks, such as *Calandrinia calytrata*, with the one mm. diameter mauve flowers. Yes, it is a relation of the Pig-face.

We found a mountain meadow of Early Nancies and Buttercups. Also some tiny Swan Greenhoods (*Pterostylis cynocephala*) and Tiny Greenhoods (*P. nana*). Having a train to catch, back in Castlemaine, Jim had strict instructions from his host to head back to the car at a certain time, which he duly did. I intended to walk back with him, then to catch up to the group again, but while I checked the direction they were going I heard him say as he disappeared into the scrub "I'll just take a short cut".

I too took a short cut across to the track we had come down earlier, and expecting to catch up to him I walk-jogged along it until I caught up with Kaye, John and Barbara. Expecting him to emerge from the bush at any minute I sat in the car awhile and enjoyed a cuppa. At 3 p.m. I set off to catch up to the main party. This was more like orienteering than a field nats' ramble! Being anxious to see if the Turners were still waiting for their guest I pressed on, arriving back at the car park at 4. p.m. They had gone, so no need of search parties (though I learned since that our veteran bushman friend had indeed been lost and had hitched a ride by car back to the car park!) They caught the train!

Our drive home, with the setting sun behind us, was much more leisurely, providing a pleasant ending to a long and enjoyable excursion.

| Stan Bruton

THE CASTLEMAINE BIRD LIST

The first edition of the Castlemaine Bird List is now on sale for 50 cents. The list includes all of the bird lists published in the Castlemaine Naturalist over the past 10 years, as well as other records made by members.

The district has been divided up into about 20 areas, and the record for many of the areas is a blank. This is a chance for you to go out with your binoculars and add to the list, for publication in Edition 2. Give your sightings to a member of the committee or to Ern Perkins.

There is room on the list for a brief note about how common the bird is. Perhaps some knowledgeable member will make such notes for edition 2 also.

E.P.

SOME COMMON INSECT PESTS OF TREES (cont)

BY Terry Collins

3. Gall Forming Insects



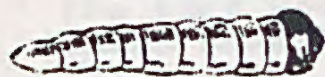
There are several groups of insects which feed within the tissue of leaves and stems causing malformation and distortion. The galls are characteristically shaped according to the species of the insect. Gall forming insects attack a wide variety of trees although infestations are usually encountered in Eucalypts. The large green-brown galls so frequently noticed on Acacias are due to a fungus although

insects may inhabit these galls.



4. Jewel Beetles or Longicorns

Damage caused by jewel beetles and Longicorns is similar for they inhabit the same region of the tree, attack trees which are debilitated, and the adults emerge from the tree making distinctly oval holes. The female beetle lays her eggs in the bark and the larvae may feed in the conductive tissue within the bark or towards the centre of the tree when they burrow into the woody tissue to pupate.



Jewel beetles are usually brightly coloured varying in length from 1/4" to 2". The larva which is the destructive stage has its head and thorax flattened resembling the head of a cobra snake. There may be one or two generations a year. In central and western N.S.W., ornamental cypresses are frequently attacked by jewel beetles. Longicorn beetles are easily recognised by their long flowing antennae. They vary considerably in size from 1/4" to 3". The larvae of the longicorn may ramble in the sapwood for several months or even years until they are almost fully fed when they will burrow into the heartwood to pupate. A few weeks after pupating the fully developed beetles cut their way out to mate and lay eggs for the next generation.

5. Thrips -- are usually dark in colour, about 1/16 to 1/8 inch in length, feed on the sap of many different trees. The adults have two pairs of wings which are fringed by fine hairs. The female thrip lays eggs in slits in the plant tissue or on the surface of the foliage. The nymphs develop by a series of moults until the adult winged stage is reached. All stages feed on the tissue by inserting their mouthparts and sucking, often leaving small discoloured pits. Thrips may produce large fleshy galls on the foliage or severely malform the terminal shoots.

6. Gum Leaf Skeletoniser Moth

The larvae of this moth can defoliate many types of trees even individual ornamental trees. Very susceptible are the Sydney Blue Gum, River Peppermint and the River Red Gum. Economic losses occur in the River Red Gum forests in the Murray Valley region. The female moth lays her eggs in rows on the surface of a leaf, the young larvae are gregarious and skeletonise the leaf, but later they disperse and feed more or less singly consuming the leaf, rather than skeletonising it. Empty head capsules after skin shedding remain piled above these heads. When fully grown the larvae, then about 1 inch long construct pupal cases on or under bark and twigs.

7. Others

Other insects also roam this area and they include:-

Saw Flies, Lerps, Leaf Beetles, Leaf Hoppers, Processional Caterpillars, White Ants, Scale Insects, borers, etc.

As you can see, leaving aside the chain saw and axe, our forest trees have to put up with a lot.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON EXCURSIONS

We are again holding Wednesday afternoon excursions. Meet promptly at 4.15 at the place named.

Wed 9 Oct KAWKA (cr Turner & Hargreaves St. Frank Blake

Wed 16 Oct BOTANIC GARDENS (car park at end of Rose Garden) Leader is Barbara Maund..

Wed 23 Oct GUILDFORD (Guildford Store) B. Perry.

Wed 30 Oct BIRDS (cr Kennedy and Mostyn St with Kaye Turner.

Wed 6 Nov CASTLEMAINE NTH (cr Sawmill and Blakelys Rd) with Rita Mills.

Wed 13 Nov. WATTLE FLAT (cr Keneddy & Mostyn St) with Ern Perkins.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Excursions leave promptly at the times shown.

Fri 11 Oct BIRTH OF A KOALA. Speaker is Mr H. Pollock, who will also show some of his films.

Sat 12 Oct Excursion to President Jack's Secret Place. Meet at SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30 p.m., or Newstead P.O. at 1.45.

Sat/Sun 26/27 October. COLAC - W.V.F.N.C.A. 25th anniversary campout.

Fri at 8pm. THE OTWAYS THROUGH THE SEASONS, Slides at Education Centre, 24 Murray St.

Sat- BUS TOUR (\$4) of Otway Rain Forest, Triplet Falls and Carlisle Heathlands. BBQ lunch (\$3). Leave St Andrews Hall (cr Pollock & Hesse St at 9.00

Sat at 7.30 EVENING MEETING at St Andrews Hall. This is the 25th anniversary meeting with program by member clubs.

Sun at 9.00 ANNUAL MEETING at Education Centre

Sun at 10.30 Local excursions with lunch at Red Rock.

TUES 5 Nov. REDESDALE WALK The annual walk is being held in on Cup Day. An all day walk in the Redesdale Forest. Leave from S.E.C., Mostyn St at 9.15 a.m. Leader is E. Perkins.

Fri 8 Nov AFRICA. Dr Gretna Weste will speak on "Game Parks in Tanzania, finding Fossil man in the Olduvai Gorge, and climbing Mt Kilimanjaro". NOT TO BE MISSED.

Sat 9 Nov. Excursion with Bird Observers Club. Leader is M. Oliver. Meet 10.30 a.m. at the Market Car Park.

Fri 13 Dec Members & visitors night. Bring a plate.

Sat 14 Dec FRYERS RIDGE. Leave SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30.

Feb 1986. BENDIGO SETTLING PONDS with Maryborough F.N.C.