

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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A suggested badge for the Club
see page 5



Our topic this month, "Roadside Trees"
The Pyrenees Highway at South Muckleford

The Month of JULY at Campbells Creek

by Terry Collins

The 23rd of July was a day to remember and I only wish that you had all been there with me for that 15 minutes. I had taken a shovel to dig around a shrub near some trees about 30 metres in front of the house, I heard the sound of small birds arriving and so stood still thinking a flock of Thornbills had arrived, But to my surprise, suddenly beautiful Spotted Pardelotes landed on the ground to feed around me. I counted 32 with more in the trees. Some even passed along feeding within six inches of my feet taking no notice of me, although I must say I stood like a statue. After about 10-15 minutes they flew off leaving me with an experience not likely to ever happen again --MARVELLOUS --.

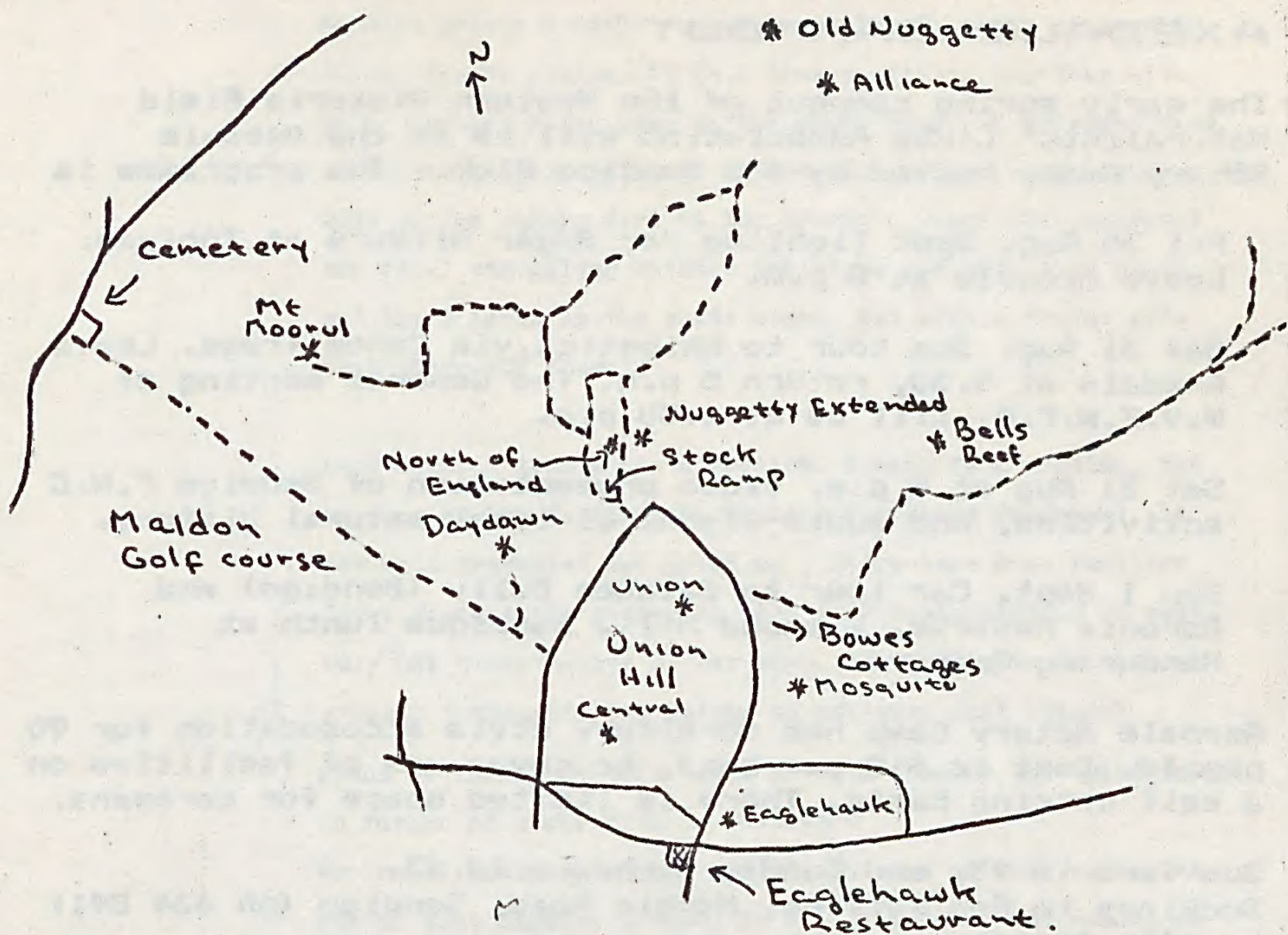
Again, another first. Late one afternoon a large bird passed the kitchen window with something in its claws, On going to the bedroom window we observed that it had landed low down in a small Wattle only about 10 metres away. It was a Grey Goshawk with beautiful plumage and it had a now dead White-naped Honeyeater. It then proceeded to pluck the feathers from its victim and eat it. Another sad story is a drive to Daylesford where around Mount Franklin we noticed many Eastern and Crimson Rosellas feeding along the road verge or maybe getting gravel pieces for their digestion but unfortunately many lie dead as casualties to the motor car.

Also noticed same day a flock of over 40 White Cockatoos feeding among some trees south of Guildford. Plantwise still very sparse except Wattles must surely burst out soon, a Bendigo Wax is budding and many small Chocolate Lillies are appearing with tiny Sundews.

EXCURSION TO NUGGETTY RANGE

The Nuggetty Range is an interesting area, and it is surprising that although the club has made several trips to Mt Moorul, it has never been to the range proper. The geology of the Nuggetty Range is rather similar to that of Mt Tarrangower. The area closest to Maldon is part of the hard resistant aureole, and has the typical sharp rocks of such an area. To the north, the rock is granitic, again with the characteristic rounded boulders found in such places..

Scattered through the reserve are mining relics. Some of the major shafts here were Nuggetty Extended, North of England, Alliance, Old Nuggetty and Day Dawn. Some of these are still exposed and quite dangerous, so take care. The richest mine in the world was found here, with a yield of



500 oz per ton (i.e about 15 kg per tonne). Average depth of the shafts was about 500 feet (160 metre). The Union and Eaglehawk and others closer to Maldon were often two or more times this.

Mt Moorul is one of the important wildflower areas for the district. Plants here include Rock Fern, the tiny Flannel Cudweed, the very rare Flat-leaf Bush-pea, Rock Isotome, Varnish Wattle, Pink Puslane, Rock Correa, and Tree Tobacco. It is the only place in the district where Spreading Night-phlox and Shade Pellitory have been found. The distinctive trees of the area are Long-leaf Box and Lightwood.

SUPERSTITIONS #4

SWANS : Once thought to be sacred in many parts of the world. Their eggs were supposed to be only able to hatch out during a storm as they needed thunder and lightning to crack open the shells. The swans themselves were said to fly out to sea when they were near the end of their lives and there they would sing a beautiful song until they died. We still use the expression "Swan Song", probably without knowing where it first came from.

AXEDALE CAMPOUT

The early spring campout of the Western Victoria Field Naturalists' Clubs Association will be at the Axedale Rotary Camp, hosted by the Bendigo Club. The programme is

Fri 30 Aug. Spot lighting for Sugar Gliders at Tooleen. Leave Axedale at 8 p.m.

Sat 31 Aug. Bus tour to Whipstick, via Canoe Trees. Leave Axedale at 9.30, return 5 p.m. The General meeting of W.V.F.N.C.A. will be at 6.30 p.m.

Sat 31 Aug at 8 p.m. Video presentation of Bendigo F.N.C. activities, and audio-visual of local natural history.

Sun 1 Sept. Car tour to Salamon Gully (Bendigo) and Boronia Reserve, Diamond Hill. Barbeque lunch at Mandurang Reserve.

Axedale Rotary Camp has dormitory style accomodation for 90 people. Cost is \$10 per head, to cover use of facilities on a self catring basis. There is limited space for caravans.

Bus fare is \$3, and Sunday Barbeque is \$3.

Bookings to Rob Watkins, Marnie Road, Bendigo (ph 434 891) by 16th August.

To reach the Camp, turn west from the Highway from near the Police Station. The camp is about 1 km from the highway

Note that the only meal supplied is the Sunday barbeque. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Bendigo F.N.C.

Green Gully Notes

by Gunther Liebl

This morning I woke to the soft sounds of Mrs. Barking Owl rather than the dreaded alarm clock. She's been around for a few days now. But today she came right up to the window. Yesterday, she and I had a close encounter down at the barn. Dawn just broke, when I tried to enter the chook shed to feed my hens, when suddenly I nearly dropped the buckets for the barks some 10 feet above me in the grey box. I turned my torch and we had a long good look at each other.

My desk graces a small rock fern, a local, sappy green with 10 new fronds rising. It is a true survivor, together with it's 3 potted mates down in the shade house. I salvaged them as specimens between rocks in the back of our land back in '83. Most of the others died in the drought. Those that survived are still struggling between the rocks and soon I'll plant out the 3 ferns in the shade house, but with a better site than their old 'home'.

Last night I took a new direction. I went to a meeting, the opening of the Castlemaine Nuclear Awareness Programme. It was well presented and moved me. There were some familiar faces amongst the gathering, but most disappointing to meet only ONE other member of our club. In the course of that evening I thought: Why bother to preserve that special stand of trees, or that patch of wild flowers that need to go in favour of a new road or whatever?

Who really cares if 'roos are slaughtered or not, or Koalas die of some disease or not, if all of us can, not could, be wiped of this planet before we know it.

The Nuclear Question should be the utmost concern to all of us. It is a HUMANITARIAN concern for all people on earth.

Life on Earth is at risk.

On a somewhat lighter note I began to scribble some badge designs on my phone pad and came up with this sketch. For size of letters I left the 'CLUB' off, included fauna and flora with the sun as our energy source and FOUR-EX as symbol of Castlemaine, and our gift to guest speakers. The circle design is for convenience only, shield designs create problems with long words. My colour scheme would be a medium to dark blue background, white lettering and the crane, a warm colour yellow for sun, its rays and the tree trunk. Finally I would use a medium green for semi circle of the land outline and the tree top.

We need to conclude a design before we can seek quotations.

So, please get down to work and bring your design to the next meeting. They must be simple and rather stylistic for effect, and be kept to a minimum for impact. GOOD LUCK

INFLUX OF OWLS NEAR NEWSTEAD

I was interested to read in the Ballarat Courier's nature notes of July 27th, a report of Barn Owls at Newstead.

Mrs Joan Butler, who takes a keen interest in the birdlife around Newstead writes of an experience she had in Mid June; "One night three weeks ago as I was returning from delivering tea to my menfolk who were sowing crops, I counted 22 barn owls along a half mile section of a quiet road.

"I stopped my vehicle and got out on quite a few occasions and closely observed them with my binoculars, using the headlights. They took practically no notice of me and even kept mousing while I watched them. It was a really fascinating experience".

The large number of Black-shouldered Kites has caused comment this year (without trying, I counted 12 of them between Creswick and Campbelltown last Saturday); and the mouse plague in the Mallee last year has been given credit. Perhaps the number of owls has increased for the same reason.

EDITORIAL It is pleasing to record that in this edition of our Newsletter there are three new contributors represented. President Jack has contributed an article on the recent Aboriginal wells trip which will make all those of us who didn't/weren't able to go wish we had. Gunter puts forward his suggestion for a club badge for your consideration, criticism and comment, together with the hope that other members may be similarly inspired. If you read this in time, don't forget that our next meeting, Aug 9, is a night for bringing your slides of roadside beauty(or otherwise).

I noticed my first Cootamundra flower for the season last Saturday, July 27, so the bush should light up shortly. In the garden, most of the singing is provided by the New Holland Honeyeaters which seem to have been around in reasonable numbers during the last month or so, together with the Spinebills.

Friday. Sep. 13 may seem an inauspicious date, but keep it free to come and hear the guest speaker Kaye has lined up for that evening or you will be sorry.

THE ABORIGINAL WELLS

by Jack Dare

The 13th July saw a fair turn-out for Albert Perry's conducted tour of Aboriginal wells in our vicinity. Fortunately quite a few Creswick F.Nats also turned out to make up the party. Leaving Clunes around 11,30 a.m., pretty well spot on for time, a merry clutch of F.N.'s purred their way along the macadam towards Talbot, passing as we did some glorious Red Gums, sentinels of the paddocks. Our first brief stop was Beckworth Court Homestead, once owned by Mr Buckland, a very wealthy man in his day. There is a gallery in the Ballarat Museum named after him; no doubt because he coughed up the money to build it. The house is a real picture peeping as it does through its well manicured shrubbery.

On then to the site of the Stony Creek School where once teachers and pupils laid out maps and geometric designs made of sandstone and quartz in the school grounds, and also planted many trees. All this without the aid of a computer. Incredible!

Hogs Shanty came up next and we had our lunch here however there's no connection between us and the Hog part of the Shanty; in fact very little is known about this stone building, but had the hobby farmers known a few years ago, maybe it could have been saved. All this time we were headed for Paddy's Ranges and Caraluloo en route and here we saw our first Aboriginal wells, pockets of water in little pouches of rock. Quite small really and guess what ? No ice ! There had been an old pub at Caraluloo up to the time of the last fire.

Next came Amherst T.B. Hospital, now only just a site and a memory, but many a miner must have been glad it was there a century ago. Albert did have a photo of it from a newspaper so we could see what had been. Possum Gully and another Aboriginal well which, although it had a bigger water pouch, there was only one, so somebody must have missed out, probably the lubras. Our next "find" was the strawberry garden, about an acre of flat ground totally enclosed by a mud wall to keep out goats - so we were told. There was also what appeared to be a floor plan of a house; the wall is about 1 metre high but no doubt in its completed glory back in the 1880's it could have been 2 metres high.

We then moved on to the remains of an old eucalyptus distillery; seems they used up a lot of bush to make the oil. Then on to the big moment and the Aboriginal wells at Maryborough, or to have it correct, Bull Gully. Here there were more pouches in the rock so even the lubras could get a drink. The writer, seeing the fence round the rock thought it may have been holy water but was told it was there because of vandals. Who would have thought it ? So there you go, as they say in the Antipodes. We all left for our own water holes and apart from Albert the Leader, the man of the match award must go to John Turner, who despite his crutches, did not miss a site.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Visitors are invited to attend the Club's sessions.
Excursions leave promptly at the times shown.
Meetings are held at the High School, room 310

Fri 9 Aug ROADSIDE TREES. The Bird Observer Slide set, members slides, and a videotape.

SAT 10 Aug NUGGETTY RANGE. Leave SEC building, Mostyn St at 1.30. Drive to Nuggetty, via Maldon, then on a moderately rough road. A 2 km round walk over undulating country. Bring your walking boots and binoculars. Afternoon tea at Mt Moorul (if leader does not get lost). Deep mine shafts are on the route.

Aug30-31, Sept1 AXEDALE. W.V.F.N.C.A campout at Rotary camp
-Fri 8 p.m. Spotighting for possums
-Sat 9.30 Bus trip to Whipstick
-Sat 6.30 W.V.F.N.C.A. meeting
-Sat 8.00 Program by Bendigo F.N.C.
-Sun 9.00 To Salamon Gully and Diamond Hill.
-Sun lunch Mandurang Reserve.

Booking is needed; see article this issue.

Great news!!! The speaker for the September meeting will be Dr Gretna Weste who has recently returned from overseas. She will speak on "Game parks in Tanzania, Finding fossil man in the Olduvai Gorge, and Climbing Mt Kilimanjaro. NOT TO BE MISSED

Sept 13-15 MELVILLE CAVES Campout arranged by Ballarat F.N.C.

Fri 11 Oct BIRDS IN CALIFORNIA Talk by Dr Pat Bingham.

Sat 12 Oct Excursion to Jack's secret place.

Fri 18-Sun 20 Oct COLAC. W.V.F.N.C.A. campout at Colac. This is 25th anniversary of the Association.

Sat9 Nov BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB Joint excursion.

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

Membership fees for 1985 are as below. Half fees are payable by members joining in the second half of the year.

\$4 Single membership	\$6 Family membership
\$2 Pensioner/student	\$10 Supporting membership.