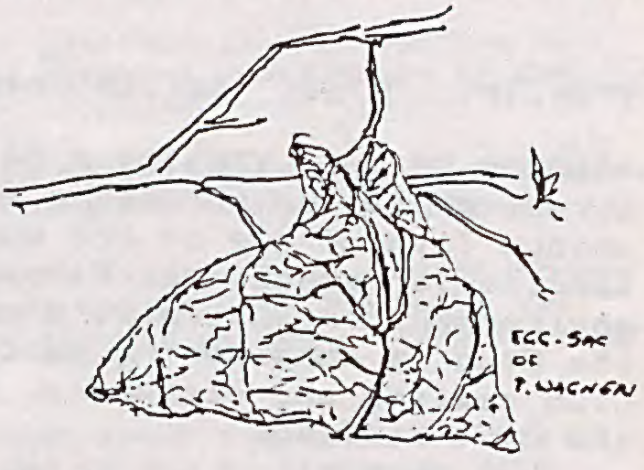
CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

JULY 1986 vol.11 #6 114

The Leaf-curling Spider

(from "Australian Spiders" by McKeon)

Amongst the most numerous of the spiders to be found in the bush and garden is the little leaf-curling spider (Phognatha wagneri). In the course of rambles through the bush one frequently finds small orb-webs extended in the sunshine, apparantly deserted by their occupants. In each web hangs a dead and curled leaf (though sometimes I have seen situations where every web has a curled fragment of newspaper, usually snugly lined with silken tapestry, hanging from its strands). Disturb this leaf ever so slightly and a spider about the size of a pea, brown in colour, with a somewhat irregular pattern of creamy yellow, tries to make its escape by dropping to the end of its silken lifeline.



Each leaf is curled by the spider's own effort, to suit its particular requirements, and retained in shape and position by slender cords of silk.

The most remarkable shelter used by this spider is an empty snail shell. The labour of hauling and securing one of these smooth and slippery shells, weighing up to 24 grams, into position with stout lines, by a spider scarcely tipping the scales at 4 grams, must be enormous.

The first efforts of the spiderlings to make shelters for themselves usually consists in stretching a sheet of silk across the slightly curled surface of a living leaf. After this leaf rolling habit has become established it can be quite ludicrous to see a growing spider vainly trying to conceal itself within a home from the ends of which the creature protrudes both fore and aft.

Eventually the permanent leaf is selected, hauled into position, and rolled to suit.

From Barbara Maund

SPECIAL SIGHTS ON THE COORONG

An Emu making its way sedately down a sandhill.

A flock of seven Red-necked Avocets feeding on the edge of the shallow water, under a beautiful sunset sky of pinks, pale yellow and duck-egg blue, with the water gleaming like silver.

Red Correa reflexa and purple Thomasia in flower, as were a fine leafed wattle and Desert Banksia.

Spiney-cheeked Honeyeaters perched on dry sticks above the scrub, noisily claiming their territory as we went for an evening walk.

****

We stayed overnight,on two occasions,on the Coorong in a Flat that some people at Wood's Well have built into the end of their shed. It was very comfortable, had its own cooking facilities, and was in a great spot to go for a walk down the nearby peninsular in the evening. We also went for a stroll around the Lakes Nature walk near Salt Creek. It was there that we saw the Thomasia and Correa, as well as quite a few birds, ten of which proved to be a flock of decoys (the Soda lake is just out of the Coorong National Park) as well as their camoflage suited owner. Doug spotted a flock of babblers on this walk, and there were lots of White-cheeked Honeyeaters. It was supposed to be an hour's walk, but we made it a good 1½ hours most enjoyable dawdle.

FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING

KINGDOM OF THE LYREBIRD A 54 minute video "Kingdom of the Lyrebird" can be purchased for $39. The brochure reads 'a unique film of one of the world's rarest, largest and most spectacular songbirds. Filmed entirely in its natural environment in Australia's magnificant forests."
The Club is considering purchase of a tape, for use at a Club meeting and elsewhere. A brochure will be tabled at the next meeting.

The ALL DAY WALK for 1986 was planned for Sat 18th October, in the Porcupine Ridge area. This date coincides with the Maryborough Campout so will probably have to be changed. The exact route has still to be finalised. We expect to arrage for some drivers to take us to the start; either we will then walk in a big circle, or arrange a picking up area. Usually we aim to walk across the bush and avoid roads and tracks.

The KAWEKA COMMITTEE is preparing a guide to the wildflower sanctuary and will include a list of plants growing in the park, together with a short description of the plant. Over the years quite a variety of native plants have been planted. The current policy of the committee is to plant only those found within a 25 km radius of Castlemaine. The committee is anxious to obtain suitable plants for inclusion in the park.

REPORTS FROM THE JUNE MEETING

ZEBRA FINCH and FORK-TAILED KITE were reported for Harcourt North. Other bird reports included Grey Teal, Spoonbill and Wood Duck.

FANTAIL CUCKOOS were seen in Maryborough by Geoff Sitch.

NEW RIDGE ROAD A new east-west road has been built, linking the Tunnel-Drummond road with Fryerstown.

HALLEY'S COMET PHOTOS, taken by Gunter Liebl were on display.

1. Members at the April meeting, backed by the comet.
2. The comet itself.
3. Constellation of Centaurus, with the moon in eclipse.
4. The comet taken with a time exposure.

The photographs can be purchased, with proceeds to the Club.

HAKEA LAURINA. A specimen of this flowering tree from W.A., with its magnificant red ball-like flowers was brought by Frank Blake, who found it in flower in Kaweka.

CLAVARIA or CORAL FUNGUS was found by Barbara Maund, growing by the roots of an Iris stylosa (Winter Iris); under a Peppercorn Tree in her garden.

TWINING FRINGE LILY (Thysanotus patersonii) was reported by Beth Ibbitson to be growing and climbing over shrubs in the Chewton Cemetery in far greater abundance than usual.

HOODED ROBINS A pair of of these magnificant birds were reported for her block aDt Muckleford by Margaret Dunne.

EARLY SPRING FLOWERS A few flowers have been seen on Mt Morgan Wattle and Golden Wattle (both at Muckleford) and Fairy Wax Flowers (Kaweka). No reports of flowers on Cootamundra Wattles have been given yet.

GALAHS can be seen in large flocks about the town. A flock of several hundred can often be seen in the Mt Alexander Golf Links/ High School areas.

LONG-BILLED CORRELLAS appear to be coming more common. A flock of about 200 has been seen near Cairn Curran.

FLOWERING IRONBARKS in the Muckleford Forest are attracting large numbers of birds.

****

The Club is planning two brochures, describing town walks, for the Festival in November. One walk will be Mostyn St to the monument, through Kalimna Point to Fletcher St, then to Buda and Kaweka, returning along Barker St. The second walk will be along Kennedy St to the foundry, around the lake and return via Bowden St and Camp Reserve. Wanted:- items of interest along these routes. Please give suggestions to the Secretary.

The W.V.F.N.C.A. Campouts

The W.V.F.N.C.A., or more fully, the Western Victoria Field Naturalist's Clubs Association is as described by its name, and has clubs from eastern South Australia to North Central Victoria. Each year there are three campouts; the two remaining campouts this year are to Mildura and Maryborough. The meetings are usually have a variety of excursions and meetings over the weekend, and are a wonderful way of meeting people with similar interests, and seeing Victoria in a way not otherwise possible.

The program for the Mildura Campout organised by the Sunraysia Naturalists' Research Trust, and will be held over the weekend 8-10 August.

- Friday evening 8 p.m. Slides at the Clubrooms, Old Powerhouse Buildings, River Front, Mildura.
- Saturday all day outing to Trentham Cliffs.Leave Club Rooms at 9.00 a.m.
- Saturday evening, dinner, meeting and speaker at St Margaret's Hall, 11th Street.
- Sunday, Hattah and Kulyne Park
- Sunday afternoon depart from Hattah.

A map showing loacations of meetings and excursions is available from our secretary, as well as a list of accomodation.

Maurice Taylor is a Yorkshireman, living (when he happens to be at home) in Sheffield. He is a gunsmith by trade and makes (and hunts with) muzzle-loading "Davey Crocket" style guns. For quite a lot of the year he travels around the world on foot, hitch-hiking, camping, roughing it generally, and while camping he lives off the land - sometimes going rather hungry, too - using a muzzle-loading rifle, knife and axe for food. For protection he is more likely to use his voice. He loves the wilderness and its creatures, and is a very interesting and unusual man to talk to. He has given me three articles to use in the magazine, all of which happen to have been written about British Columbia where he spent most of his time last holiday. This time it was New Zealand. I hope you will enjoy them.

Ed.

By the way, he travels with a pack no bigger, and much more tatty, than the one I take up the bush with me when I go for a walk, with a sleeping bag wrapped in a large sheet of black plastic, which is his "tent", tied to it!

A TALE OF TWO MOOSE

I was plodding down a river named Mosley Creek heading down to the Homathko river which both pass through the towering mountains of the coast range of British Columbia. I had a .451" of my own make, much like the "Volunteer" but long before they thought of making them (or Enfields). It was a fine October day, and thinking to harvest Spruce Grouse or a Franklin, I had loaded a whole 15 grains and greased rag and a naked oversize revolver ball which load is enough and very quiet, but it has a curving flight. So, spotting a bull moose grazing in a marsh, I thought I would avoid him (the moose at this time of year gets short tempered with anything he regards as a rival, and he has even charged railway line crew coaches) so I kept to the heavy riverside cover intending to by pass them. But lo, in the midst of this jungle, I hear the crash of large hooves and find myself looking up the nostrils of a full grown bull moose scarce eight feet away. Thus confronted, I was not a little taken aback, but the brain worked, and calculating the futility of retreat in such cover, I recalled an article I had once read regarding bears and how talking to them shakes their otherwise superior confidence. I tried this on Brer moose. I explained to him how I had a most formidable rifle, and how I never missed, and how I had been known to eat moose for tiffin and

that a smart moose would back off. To this I added unkind observations as to his looks and ancestry and babble of this sort for what may have been several minutes, my heart beats slowing as my eloquence and confidence grew. This was much too much for Brer moose. He loped off to join the cow, and I made for the river's edge and got a photo of them 40 or 50 yards off, the bull still trying to figure it all out. Pity the close up never came out, it being gloomy in the trees. Not since then have I been as close, but the "chat to em" technique worked on a later occasion, and relieved I was that it had for, would you believe it, the damned rifle misfired when I did come to fire it at Franklin. I had no intention of shooting my curious mate (my only real defence would be one of grab and stab as best I might with knife or axe, but I have no illusions as to the likely outcome being painful). I suppose it was just one of those incidents that makes me view the Hawken or any single rifle with no particular respect, and champion the double smooth bore as the best choice for similar trips. With this one can keep a ball in one barrel whilst loaded for small game with shot in the other.

Maurice Taylor

BIRD LIST #2 ADDITIONS

CORMORANT	Great Black Cormt	h	Little Black Cormt	h	Little Pied Cormt	a
GREBE	Little Grebe	a				
HERONS	Pacific Heron	hsw	White-f Heron	aw	Straw-necked Ibis	q
SPOONBILL	Yellow-bill Spb	h				
DUCKS	Wood Duck	a	Black Duck	afs	Black Swan	s
	Grey Teal	s	Maned Duck	c		
HAWKS	Whistling Kite	hq	Black-sh kite	c	Brown Goshawk	h
	Little Eagle	ht	Brown Falcon	cghq	Nankeen Kestrel	a
	Black Kite	ch				
COOT	Coot	aws	Black-tail N Hen	h	Avocet	h
LAPWING	Lapwing	qs	Black-frnt Plover	s	Silver Gull	h
PIGEONS	Comon Bronzewing	nu				
PARROTS	Galah	nst	Purple-crnd L'keet	n	Little Lorikeet	n
	Crimson Rosella	efn	Eastern Rosella	an	Red-rump Parrot	aen
	Musk Lorikeet	n				
CUCKOOS etc	Fan-tail Cuckoo	n	Owlet Nightjar	i		
SWIFTS	White-back swallow	n	Tree Martin	n	Welcome Swallow	f
KINGFISHER	Rainbow Bee-eater	n	Kookaburra	a		
LARKS	Grey Thrush	en	Black-fc Cuckoo-sh	n		
ROBINS	Flame Robin	intw	Scarlet Robin	efn	Yellow Robin	n
	Crested Shriketit	fn	Rufous Whistler	i	Golden Whistler	i
FANTAILS	Willy Wagtail	cfnq	Grey Fantail	egiw		
BABBLERS	White-browed Bbler	n				
WRENS	Blue Wren	fhq	White-br Srub-wren	i		
THORNBILLS	Yellow Thornbill	et	Yellow-rump thbl	enu	Striated Thornbl	fq
HONEY-	Red Wattlebird	q	Yellow-tufted h-e	n	Yellow-faced h-e	n
EATERS	Fuscous h-e	n	White-naped h-e	n	Noisy miner	g
	White-eared h-e	fqt	Brown-headed h-e	nw	Black-chinned h-e	e
	White-plumed h-e	c	New Holland h-e	a		
CHATS etc	Mistletoe Bird	i	White-fronted Chat	l		
PARDALOTES	Striated Pardte	in	Whiteface	g	Silvereye	a
FINCHES	Goldfinch	t	Red-browed Firetl	nq	Diamond Firetail	n
	Sparrow	c				
MAGPIES etc	White-w Chough	fin	Magpie Lark	n	Starling	ch
	Olive-back Oriole	n	Magpie	efs	Australian Raven	q
	Grey Curawong	ah	Dusky Woodwsallow	n		

The Coconut Palm

(from "Palms of Australia", by David Jones)

It is estimated that about 400,000 people in the South Pacific depend entirely on the coconut for their livelihood. World production is more than 3000 million nuts annually. The major producers are the Philippines, India and Indonesia. Estimate of individual tree yields vary somewhat from 75 to 350 nuts per annum.

Every part is used in some way. For example, the meat can be cooked in more than a hundred different dishes or eaten raw, or shredded, dried and exported as dessicated coconut; the water, especially that of a green coconut, makes a refreshing drink, or it can be blended with the meat to make coconut milk, cream or jam; the shell can be burnt, made into charcoal, used as bowls, scoops or cups; the fibre can be made into mats or woven into string or ropes; the leaves used for thatching and the leaflets for weaving; the woodfor building; the flowers for palm honey and the sap of the inforescence for palm sugar, alcohol and the potent drink arrak; oil can be extracted from the kernals and the dried kernals (copra) are an important component of this process as they can be stored and transported; after oil extraction the remaining meaty material can be pressed into a cake suitable for animal feed. Coconuts are sold to tourists, either whole or with designs carved into the husks; the water of green coconuts has growth regulatory properties and is added to the growing media used in tissue culture and for raising orchid seedlings.

****

Perhaps someone has had experience of how coconuts are resourcefully used in Australia?

PALM ODDITIES

The palm produces the largest seed in the plant kingdom: up to 20 kg for oneseed of the Double Coconut from the Seychelles Islands, and the longest leaf: over 20 metres in length, from the Madagascar Raffia Palm. Extremes in height are provided by the Lilliput Palm from Paraguay. 10 to 15 cm tall at maturity, and the Wax Palm of the Andes, more than 60 meters high.

From Barbara Maund.

from "The Australian Garden Journal" Jan '86

"The Garden Seed Inventory is an inventory of 240 seed catalogues in the USA and Canada. It lists all the non-hybrid vegetable and garden seeds still being offered and is therefore intended as a conservation resource. It includes variety name, number of days to maturity, plant description, and a list of all known sources. The 448 page book describes 5,785 varieties; it was found that of all the non-hybrid seeds listed 48% were available from no more than one out of a possible 240 sources.

from Barbara Maund

from "The Australian Gardener", Jan '86

" ne of the many exhibits in the Museum and Education Centre (of the Hobart Botanical Gardens) is a disc of Huon Pine taken from a specimen which spanned 480 years."

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 11th July. NATURAL HISTORY OF THE OTWAYS with Murray Hodge of Colac Field Naturalists. 8.00 p.m. at High School.

Sat 12th July. SPRING GULLY REVISTED. We return to this locality, for some more history, and another look at the birds of the area. 1.30 p.m. at S.E.C., Mostyn St.

Thurs 31July BUSINESS MEETING. Note change to 5th Thursday. Business includes preparation of Bird List edition 3. 38 Campbell St at 7.30.

Fri 8th Aug. APPLICATIONS OF BIRD WATCHING with Greg Binns of the Ballarat F.N.C.

Sat 9th Aug. ORCHIDS AT WATTLE FLAT. Meet 1.30 at SEC.

Fri-Sun 8-10 Aug MILDURA CAMPOUT. Western Victoria Field Naturalists' Clubs Association campout

-Fri 8th : Slides at Clubrooms
-Sat 9th : All day outing to Trentham Cliffs
: Evening meeting with speaker
-Sun 10th : Hattah and Kulkyne Park

Sun 24th Aug. BIRD OBSERVER'S CLUB EXCURSION TO THE WHIPSTICK.

Fri 12 Sept. BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA with Dr Pat Bingham.

Sat 13 Sept SMITH'S REEF WILDFLOWERS AND BIRDS. Meet S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30 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 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 18th Oct. PORCUPINE RIDGE all day walk. Date to be confirmed.

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

****

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.