

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST



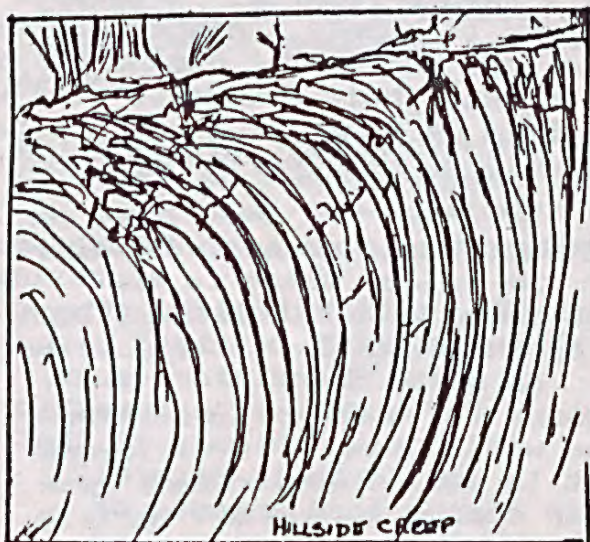
May 1986

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GOLDFIELD RELICS IN THE BUSH

The excursion to the site of Eureka township and Spring Gully proved to be very popular indeed. Several who didn't know the day of the outing had been changed to the Saturday turned up on Sunday, and were escorted by Barbara, who, to all accounts enjoyed her second outing as much as the first, and others have been out again since.



I was one who had no idea of the interesting things that are to be found in the bush behind Chewton.

After meeting our excursion leader, Ken McKimmie, near the railway bridge in Eureka Street we drove out towards our first halting place on the Monk, armed with maps that Ken had provided us with. A short walk down a rough track brought us to an old mining tunnel which had been cut through layers of slate and under a Monk. Some brave people took a torch and went down the tunnel to the place where it drops down a shaft (I wasn't one of them!). Interesting to see on the sides of the entrance were very good examples of hillside creep.

We drove on again for a short distance, past the spot where part of the old township was on the sides of the Monk, although there is little evidence now, except for flattened spots where the old Hotel, outbuildings and huts were, to another part of the township, where there are still several ruins, though an interesting old floor has been ripped up by Telecom when they were putting in a phone line, and the stones have gradually 'walked', which is a pity.

Next stop was to visit an outcrop of quartz that had been mined back in the late 1800's. The trench down the west sidewhere most of the gold was found was only about 3 m wide, but was roughly 10 m deep. It is quite

dangerous now as lumps of quartz have a bad habit of falling off the sides. The eastern side of the 3-6 m wide reef wasn't much safer as tunnels had been dug along side and holes opened here and there on the surface. An old Ironbark, which was photographed in 1896 fallen across the trench is still there, very much the worst for wear now, but still alive - just.

From there we walked around to another part of the old township where the remains of the wall of the old pyrites works were inspected. It was not very far from here that we saw an interesting hole in the creek bank that looked as if it might be a nest hole. Next day Barbara and her companions saw an Owlet Nightjar nearby. He just sat for quite some time and they were able to get a good look at it.

A short visit to the mine opposite finished our visit to that spot. Next stop was to visit a 100m chimney which had been built up the slope of the gully side. The top had been built vertically, but the rest was made of stones with keystones to hold the shape, and mostly at an angle, I'd guess, of 30° - 35°. Ken had thought it was a reef when



he first saw it, until he saw where stones had been removed, and the tunnel was showing. Another chimney visited was on the opposite side of the road and about 300 m into the bush. It was a normal chimney of the Cornish type - but strange to see in the 'middle of nowhere'.

Excerpts from an article in the "Age" by Warrick Forge

(Contributed by Terry Collins)

"Ralph and Maudie Shackleford took up six hectares of land in the Tumic Valley near Emerald which had been totally cleared by a timber company. Being Nature Lovers they were determined to restore the landscape, starting from scratch by building a dam and creating a nature reserve. Wild dogs roamed in packs and had to be eradicated and up to twenty a night were disposed of. Feral cats were a greater problem, and the use of humane traps have reduced their numbers. It was found out that their favourite food was Sugar Gliders and native animals will die within 24 hours of a cat's bite. so lethal are feral cats to wildlife that a wallaby will perish from eating toxic grass growing through cat droppings.

"Now, with their neighbour there is about 250 acres of native bush where wildlife can roam freely and in safety. In the valley there is approximately 580 species of native shrubs and the area teems with birdlife. The existence of the Numbat has been confirmed by the C.S.I.R.O. along with Lyrebirds, Wombats and varieties of possum. As Ralph Shackleford says, 'You have not lived until you have had a possum for a pet. The domestic pet is dependant on you. The big difference with native animals is that they are not dependant. If they love you it is due to their natural instincts and that is a much finer thing than coming from a sense of dependency.'

"The Shacklefords have registered a covenant on the land with the Victoria Conservation Trust which will bind all future purchasers to preserving the balance between man and nature."

It is not called "Paradise Park", but Whispering Gums!"

T.C.

NEWS AND NOTES

HARCOURT NORTH Some members joined the excursion to Harcourt Reservoir with Len Robinson and the B.O.C. Birds sighted included Shovellers, Hoary-headed Grebe, Little Grebe and Zebra Finch.

BROKEN BRIDGE A Darter (or Snake Bird) was reported from the Broken Bridge at Llaancoorie. The darter is not on our bird list. Has anyone else seen one near Castlemaine?

LEAF-CUTTING BEES were reported for Castlemaine township, carrying cut leaves, about the size of the bee's body, to the nest situated in a crack in a concrete step.



MUCKLEFORD Spinebills and Wattlebirds were reported for the Muckleford Nursery

KANGAROO RAT A dead animal, believed to have been a Kangaroo rat was reported for North Muckleford. This animal has possibly been sighted many years ago, again in Muckleford, so perhaps they are still about the district.



GREY CURRAWONGS have been reported back to the Muckleford forest.

VANDALS AT RED WHITE AND BLUE MINE. Vandals with a chain saw have cut and removed some of the supports for the Red-white and Blue mine, making the future of the magnificent structure in doubt.

BLUE DEVIL has been reported for a private property at North Muckleford. This is a quite beautiful native plant, and well worth growing in a garden. Geoff Sitch suggests that sowing of seed should be an effective propagating method. Perhaps a member could grow some - it would make a wonderful raffle prize.

WHITE-PLUMED HONEYEATER The first record (since the bird list started) of a White-plumed Honeyeater in a Castlemaine Garden has been made. How many more of our familiar birds are not yet recorded for urban Castlemaine?

ADDITIONS TO THE BIRD LIST These are additions to the second edition of the Castlemaine Bird List.

Australian Shelduck	h	Pink-eared duck	h
Shoveller	h	Red-necked avocet	h
Grey Shrikethrush	i	Tree Martin	h
Scarlet Robin	i	Cockatiel	w
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	i	Superb Fairy-wren	h
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	ai	Varied Sitella	i
White-throated Treecreeper	i	Noisy Miner	h
White-eared Honeyeater	i	Fuscous Honeyeater	i
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	i	Brown-headed Honeyeater	u
White-plumed Honeyeater	u	White-naped Honeyeater	i
Restless Flycatcher	i	Grey Fantail	i
Eastern Spinebill	i	*European Goldfinch	i
*House Sparrow	i	Magpie Lark	h
Australian Raven	h	Zebra Finch	h

from Bird Observer
April 1986

SPRING COACH TRIP

Castlemaine/Maldon - Saturday, 9th November, 1985

Birdos never cease to amaze me! 'The Bird Observer' announced we were to leave from outside the Gas & Fool (oops, I mean Fuel) at 8.30 a.m., and by 8.30 a.m. here we were, a whole coach load complete with binoculars, lunch, thermos and even an umbrella or two, all ready to go (don't we ever sleep?).

We left a very overcast Melbourne - the coach driver introduced himself and then announced (wait for it!) the coach had its own 'loo' - birding in the 20th century. The sun came out, Virginia Morrison gave us a travelogue - the history of Diggers' Rest, Castlemaine Market and the historic town of Maldon (she'd done her homework well, as usual).

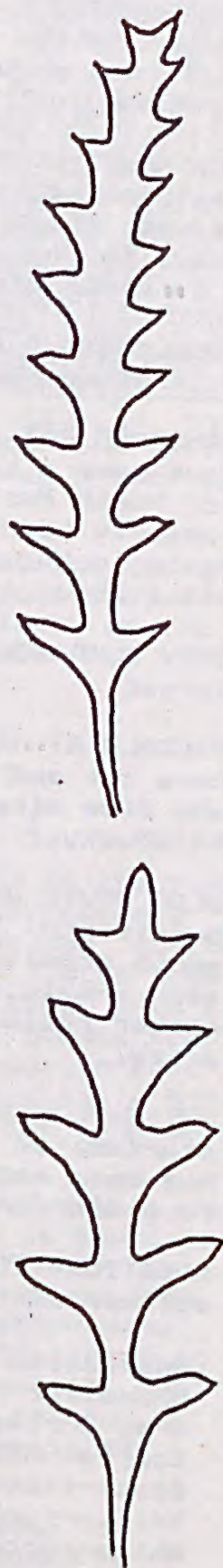
First stop Castlemaine where we met up with members of the local Field Nats. Maggie Oliver, our leader for the day, was there to greet us and wasn't it good to see Kay Turner again? A short trip to the Market and a stroll in the gardens, back into the coach and off to the ruins of the old Gower School where we met up with more Field Nats. from Castlemaine and Bendigo. Birds were all around us in abundance and the Striated Pardalotes made sure everyone saw them flitting in and out of the ruins. Hardly time for a mouthful of Morning Tea when our hosts piled us into their cars and off we went to see the largest Eagle's nest I'd ever encountered - it must have been all of 10 feet deep (sorry, about 3 metres), and then a further treat - the wedgy flew overhead pursued by 4 magpies and an Australian Kestrel and what a chase it was (who needed the Melbourne Cup for excitement?) We later saw a great old man W.T. Eagle on the ground - perhaps the same one.

Back to our coach, off we went through Maldon and beyond Mt. Tarrengower to 'the other side of the mountain'. Lunch was followed by a very rewarding bird-walk, not to mention the array of wildflowers - that magnificent display of blue and white Rock Isotome.

Altogether 62 bird species were sighted in the area - the highlights were the Western Warbler (unrecorded before in that area), Black-eared Cuckoo (first sighting in the area for some time), Rufous Song Lark, White-winged Triller, Speckled Warbler, Fuscous Honeyeater, Yellow-tailed Honeyeater, Southern White-Face, Sacred Kingfisher, Diamond Firetail, White-browed Woodswallow and what a send off when the Rainbow Bee-eater came to say 'goodbye' to the coach.

A very happy and satisfied coach load arrived back in Melbourne, the birding had been good, the weather fine and warm and the hospitality of our Castlemaine hosts will remain with us forever - thank you Maggie, Kay and all the rest and thank you too, Virginia, what a great bunch of people you all are.

Gloria McKay



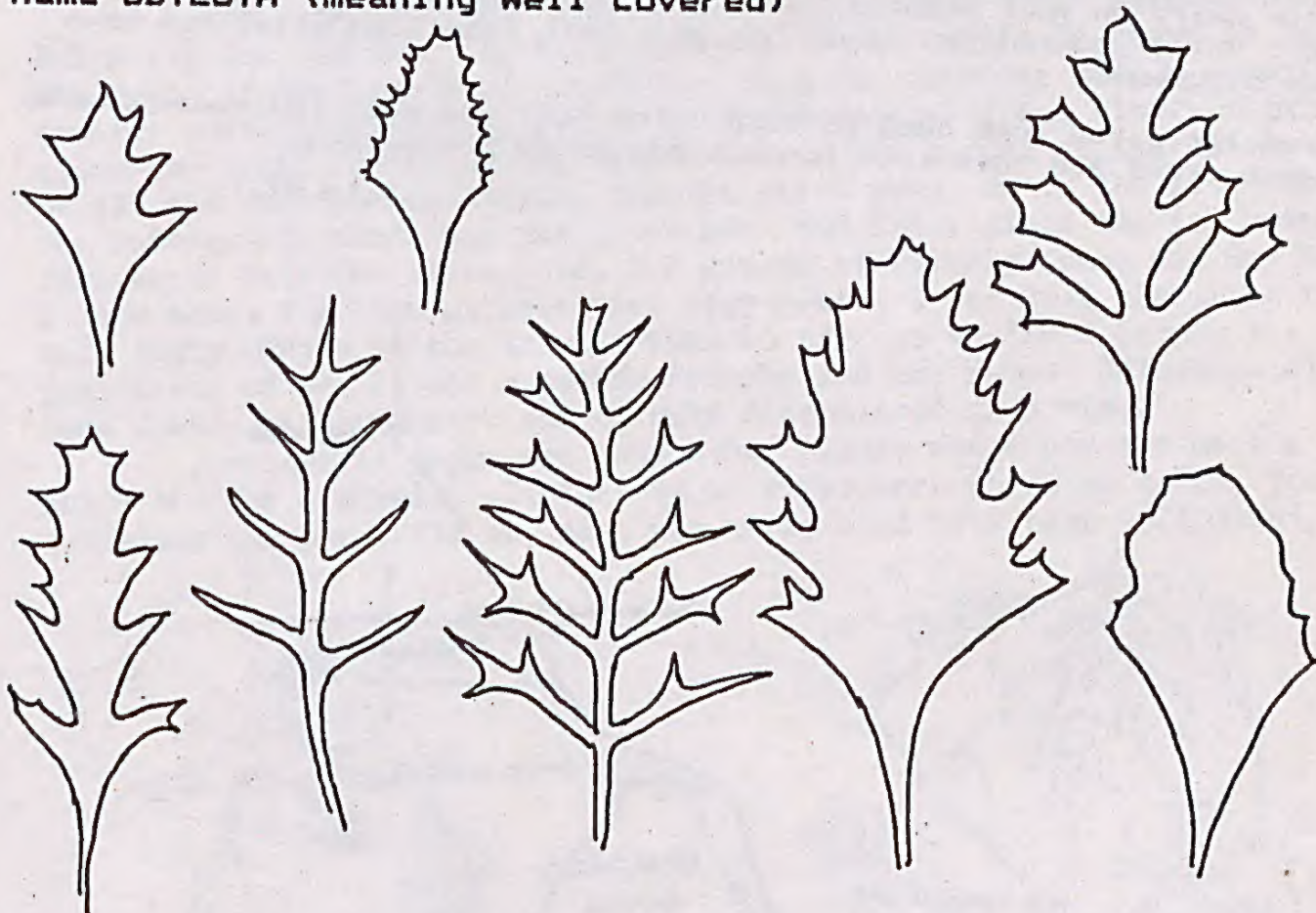
FRYERS RIDGE GEVILLEA

The flat-growing grevillea from the Fryers Ridge area now has an official name - *Grevillea obtecta*.

This grevillea is quite common in the area south of Castlemaine. It is recorded for our plant list for the Taradale bushland and the Fryers Ridge and Porcupine Ridge areas. It is easily found as it seems to appreciate light and so is common along the forest tracks. It has a flat-growing habit and can spread to about a metre across. In good areas it can carpet the roadside for many metres.

Although from a distance it looks to uniform, the leaves have a surprisingly varied shape, as the accompanying illustrations show. The drawings are from leaf prints made by Ian Evans (Bendigo Native Plant Group, April Newsletter), and show leaves at reduced sizes.

The flower buds form in Autumn and are covered by bracts; these bracts may completely hide the flower buds; hence the name *OBTECTA* (meaning well covered)



A Detour on the Way to Shepparton
(Especially for 'Birdos')

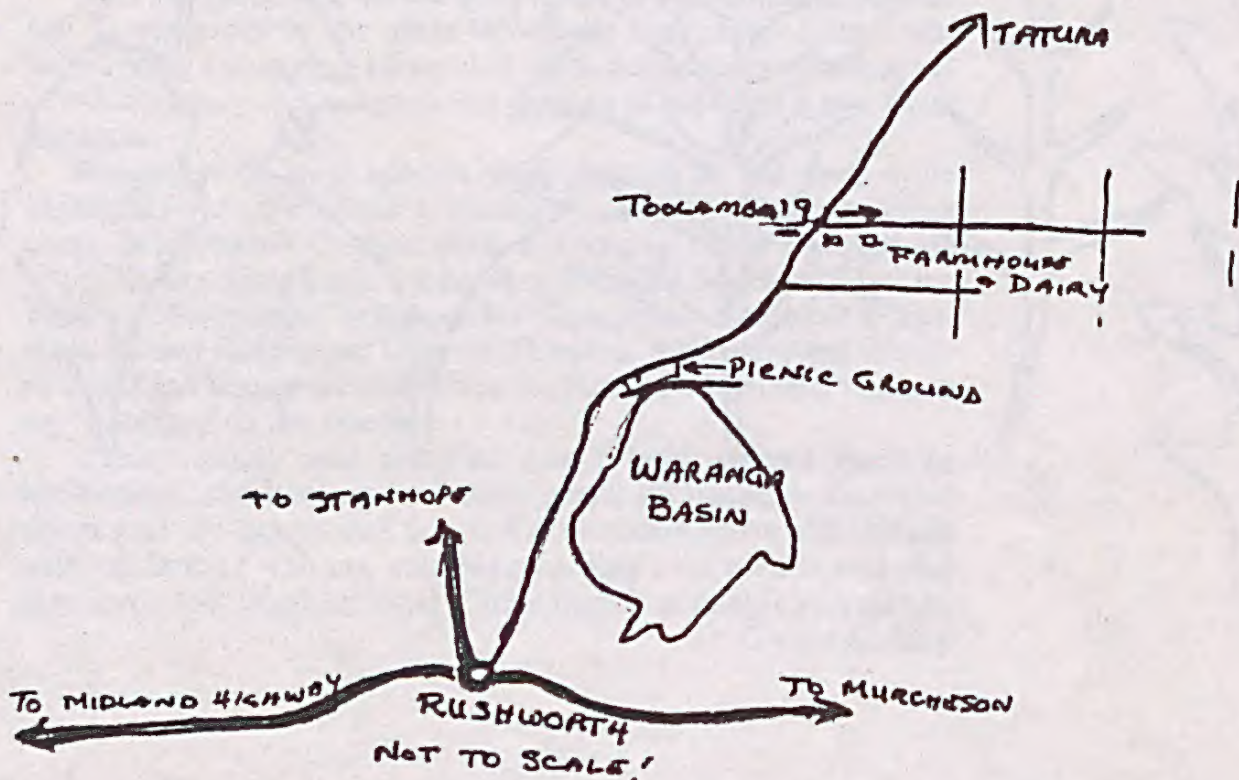
This particular spot was found accidentally when we were hunting for the way to Dhurringile, once a great homestead, but now a prison. We didn't find Dhurringile that time, but we did find a marvellous place for birds.

We've now re-located that spot well enough to give directions. We think that the area could have been a trial paddy for rice, as it is laid out in about four shallow rectangular dams about 2 or 3 acres in area, and divided again by shallow mud 'walls'. When we first found it, in January, there was a great variety of water birds on it including Pied Stilts, Red Necked Avocets and many ducks including a group of five I am pretty sure were Freckled Duck by their dark colour and funny upturned beak. This time, and it was pouring rain so we didn't stay long, there were mainly Black Duck and Silver Gulls, but the Avocets were there again, and so was one lone Glossy Ibis, the first either of us had ever seen.

To get there, take the Rushworth road, and then turn left in the town towards Shepparton via Tatura. After the picnic ground at Warranga Basin take the second turn to the right, with a distance post which gives the distance to Toolamba as 19 kilometers. The road is gravel for the first few kilometers. Just after you turn the corner to Toolamba there will be a concrete dairy on your right and a weaterboard farmhouse. Just keep going straight until you see the 'dams' on your left some time after you have met the bitumen.

From there you just need to keep going 'til you meet the Mooroopna to Murcheson road and turn left to continue on to Shepparton.

Rita Mills



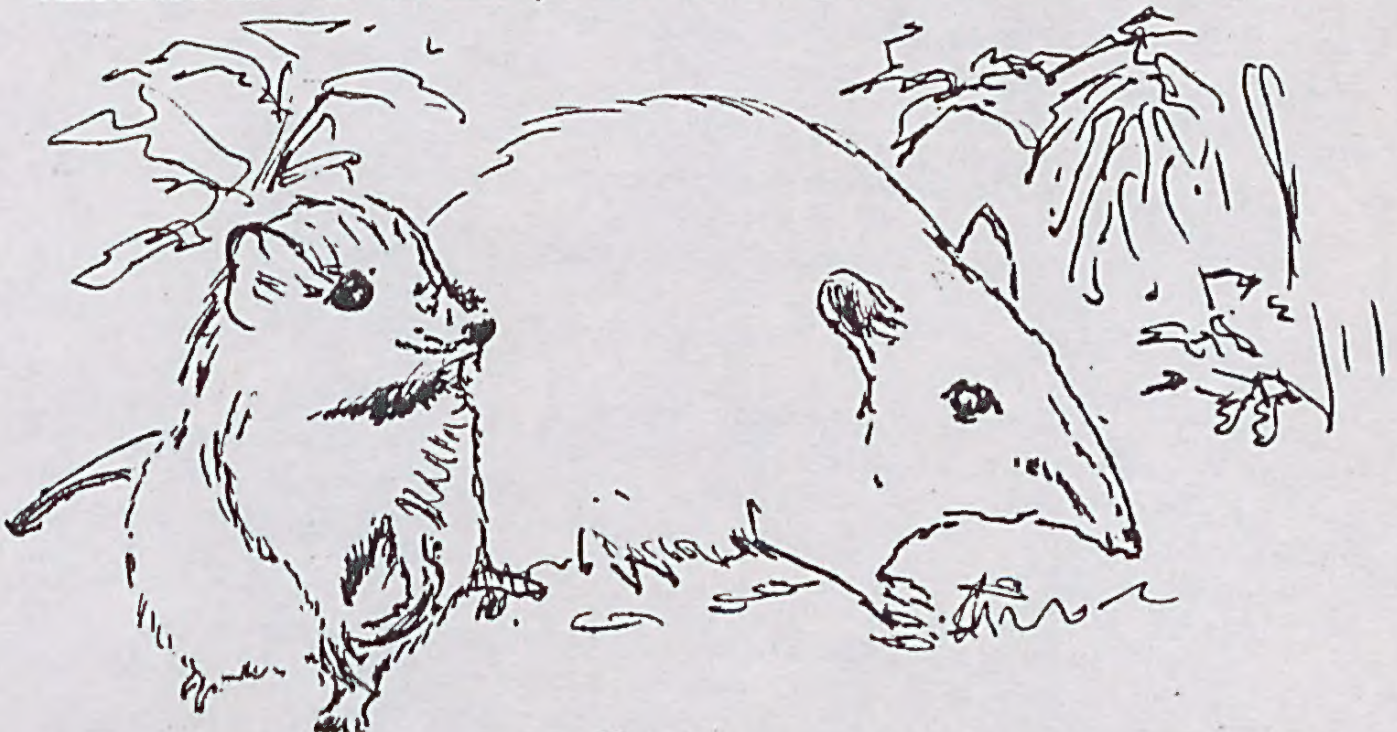
There is a small lake in Western Victoria which may have a name but if so, it does not appear on any sign. Perhaps it is too close to Lake Corangamite and Lake Gnarpurt, alongside which it looks rather like a mere duck pond. Which in fact is what it is. I often take the route which takes me between the two larger lakes mentioned because they are a fascinating sight anyway, but as a bonus, there are usually some water birds to be seen on this small lake(pond).

Thus it was that I was passing this spot last Sunday, when seeing that there were many birds covering the surface of the water I felt the urge to pull up to take a look through the ever-ready binoculars. Sure enough the shoreline and shallow water was thickly populated by Lapwing and Coot, while farther out were many swans and grebe.

However, much to my surprise, the distant surface, out in the middle was covered by a vast array or fleet of a relatively unfamiliar duck. I had on a previous visit seen half a dozen or so Pink-eared Duck but never before anything like this. The numbers must have easily been into the hundreds. As I was already running late I did not stop to count, besides which they were at a considerable distance. By contrast, the surface of the two large lakes nearby were almost devoid of bird life.

A short time earlier I was wandering along a trail through the Ralph Illidge Sanctuary near Warrnambool. I had called in there to inspect the tract of land adjoining which our club has recently made a contribution towards purchasing. Having walked to the boundary, I was slowly returning along the trail observing the various birds and musing on the likely users of all the interesting-looking tunnels which open on to the path through the undergrowth which has now grown fesh and dense since the Ash Wednesday fire which left the place bare. The growth of Prickly Koses and Hop Wattle is now about 2 m high at least and very dense. I was just picturing the fat, furry owners of the tunnels when two of them wandered across the path just ahead of me. It was a mother Potoroo and her baby. Unfortunately they soon found another tunnel and quickly disappeared from view.

I wonder if there are many other places where you can meet a Potoroo while out for a stroll. If that is an experience which we value, for ourselves and our children, then our money will have been well spent.



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 you are not at the meeting check with a committee member.

Fri 9th May. THE RED KANGAROO, and EGRETS. Wildlife films shown by Harold Pollock. 8 p.m. at the High School, room 309.

Sat 10th May. BIRDING AROUND MT TARRENGOWER. We plan to look at the birds that live on the west side of Mt Tarrengower. Bring your binoculars. 1.30 at the SEC, Mostyn St.

Fri 13th June. CRETE AND IRELAND. A view of the wildlife and plants of these islands, with Hilary Weatherhead. High School at 8.00 p.m.

Sat 14th June. MINERAL SPRINGS TOUR with George Broadway. Become a mineral springs connoisseur as you sample the local waters! Not to be missed. Leave SEC at 11.00 a.m.

Fri 11th July. Murray Hodge of Colac Field Naturalists.

Sat 12th July. SPRING GULLY REVISTED. We return to this locality, for some more history, and another look at the birds of the area.

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

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

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

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.

Sat 18th Oct. All day walk in Porcupine Ridge area. Date to be confirmed.

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

COMMITTEE Ern Perkins(Pres), Barabara Maund(Sec), Geoff Sitch(Treas), Maggie Oliver(Vice Pres), Kay Turner(Exc. sec), George Broadway(Libr), Rita Mills(Newsletter), Gunter Liedl, Margaret Dunn, Alma Kelly, Jack Dare(I/P Pres), Berry Perry.

Articles for the magazine can be left at Tonks Hardware, Barker St.
