



118 AUG 1970



THE
**GRANITE BELT
NATURALIST**



Monthly Newsletter of the
Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club



FIELD OUTING TO SWANFELS - SUNDAY, JULY 19.

On Sunday, July 19th our Club, with Mr. Edgar McCulloch of Warwick as leader for the day, undertook a field trip to Swanfels, via Warwick.

Our rendezvous was at the Hospital Park, Warwick, whence we paid a visit to Mr. & Mrs. Ben Stockwell's home to view their rock, mineral and gem collection where we were shown some of the types of specimens that we could expect to find later in the day.

At a few minutes past eleven o'clock we set out from Warwick and travelled to Swanfels, traversing country which should have been verdantly green but which, due to the long drought presented rather a less picturesque setting for our day's outing. The trip was well attended, but there was still ample parking area for all the vehicles.

After a pleasant picnic lunch, members roamed around on the hill-sides and in the bed of the creek itself, which we followed for some distance and at one spot came upon ice covering the entire width of the creek and which was thick and strong enough to support the weight of some of our members.

There are many types of rocks and minerals to be found in this section of the Swanfels valley and specimens we did find included quite a lot of chalcedony and various colours of the common opal, which has been called "rainbow opalite." There were specimens of green agate, several members of the zeolite family of minerals, as well as a lot of other interesting types of rocks etc. These mineral specimens are all of highly volcanic origin, being formed many millions of years ago when this section of the land was in a very turbulent state.

As a matter of interest, in October 1966 two local residents were granted a mining lease to mine and sell the common opal, which although very beautiful in appearance, proved, in the main, to be of relatively unstable character as far as some types of lapidary processing are concerned. However, the deposit of this colourful common opal still attracts, every week end, quite a number of enthusiasts go to the area and all seem to be satisfied with their finds and their day's outing.

This particular section of the country is quite mountainous and, in normal seasons is most beautiful for day trippers and tourists and is reached by quite a good road, in dry weather, by all classes of vehicles. A Field Naturalists' Club such as ours, with its great diversity of interests could find the Swanfels Valley a highly interesting spot at practically any time as there are so many different types of tree and bush growth, mineral deposits, rock formations, and photographers' subjects (for close-up or panoramic views). Bird life is always abundant, Swan Creek flows cool and clear and for the geologically inclined there are many spots of interest, including at least one peaked, acidic, extinct volcanic cone.

During our July outing we made a very interesting stop at a property at Yangan. There was a very large array of old machinery the star attraction being two ancient mammoth threshers manufactured by Ransome Sims & Jeffries Ltd., Ipswich, England. One of them was displayed at the Brisbane Exhibition in 1907. It had been imported complete with traction engine. The thresher weighed approximately 4 tons and the engine 12 tons and the price was £800 complete.

The plant was used for threshing grain from wheat that was cut with a binder and stacked until completely dry. It was pointed out that in those days there was no problem with moist grain as it was impossible to thresh it unless thoroughly ripe and dry. Three drays were used to cart the sheaves to the thresher which, when working must have been an awe inspiring sight, with turning wheels, flapping belts and erupting clouds of dust.

It was moved from farm to farm and to transport such a cumbersome machine must have required enormous ingenuity, particularly after rain. We were told that the thresher was working until ten years ago but the traction engine had been replaced by a modern tractor.

Ray Tromer told us that his wife's brother still operated a similar type of thresher in England. He uses it in preference to a modern harvester as he produces straw for thatching buildings. He grows a special type of wheat with a tough straw which is very much in demand. Thatched roofs are a great tourist attraction and the limited number of skilled thatchers are kept very busy.

Among other old implements on the property was an even older thresher which had been converted to thresh corn and a chaff cutter manufactured by Cliff & Bunting in Melbourne in 1912 which was used until very recently.

Bird Notes from field outing:-

Black-shouldered Kite
Nankeen Kestrel
Galah
Eastern Rosella
Tree Creeper
Blue Wren
Willie Wagtail
Happy Jack
Crested Pigeon
Sparrows & Starlings

Black-backed Magpie
PeeWee
Crow
Currawong
Pied Butcherbird
Kookaburra
White-necked Heron
White-faced Heron
Straw-necked Ibis
Black Duck

The Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus notatus*) has been seen in the Stanthorpe area in increased numbers recently, one even having been recorded perched on the phone wires near the Boulevard Motel. This influx is no doubt caused by the dry conditions on the Downs for this bird normally prefers the open wheat lands where it hunts mice, insects and small reptiles. It is one of our smaller hawks, an attractive delicate grey bird with jet black shoulders and patches

under the wings. Its flight is slow and graceful with intricate aerial evolutions. It is a completely beneficial bird and is totally protected by law.

REPORT OF ANNUAL MEETING

The meeting was declared open at 8 p.m. in the presence of 35 members. Apologies were received from 2 members.

Minutes from the inaugural meeting held in the Civic Centre Library Basement on the 26th November 1969 were read.

The President Mr. T Chapman in his annual report expressed his appreciation of the enthusiasm of the members of this newly formed club and thanked the committee for their help during this period.

Mr Chapman also moved a special vote of thanks to Mrs. F. Tremeer and Mrs. I. Chapman for making the club Newsletter a reality.

The annual adoption was seconded by Mr. F. Tremeer after movement for adoption by Mr. Chapman.

Advice was received that the constitution for the Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club had been received from the printers and would be issued to members as they paid their dues for the ensuing term.

The Treasurer's report indicated a balance of \$52.92. This report was moved by Miss J. Westacott and seconded by Mr. F. Wilkinson.

Mrs. F. Tremeer presented the design of the cover of the club's newsletter for the club's approval which was unanimously accepted.

The election of offices for the 1970-71 term was chaired by Mr. W. Cathcart who congratulated Mr. T. Chapman on his effort as past president and nominated him for a further term as president. This was seconded by Mr. B. Dodd and carried by the meeting.

The results of the elections for further office bearers were as follows

Vice President	Mr. W. Cathcart & Mrs. J. Harslett
Secretary	Mr. E. Walker
Treasurer	Miss J. Westacott
Librarian	Mr. M. Fox
Newsletter Editor	Mrs. F. Tremeer
Assistant Editor	Mrs. I. Chapman
Bushwalking Rep.	Mr. R. McCosker
Fauna Rep.	Mrs. I. Chapman
Flora Rep.	Mr. B. Dodd
Geology Rep.	Mrs. Z. Newman
Youth Rep.	Mr. S. Wilmot

Mr. B. Dodd then introduced Dr. F. Kirkpatrick of the Hermitage who addressed the meeting. The subject of his address was the 'plight' or 'otherwise' of marsupials in Australia and special mention was made of marsupials in the Granite Belt and

Warwick districts.

A vote of thanks was moved by Mr. W. Cathcart to Mr. Kirkpatrick after which the meeting was closed. The time being 9.40p.m.

PROGRAMME FOR AUGUST

23rd August	Outing	Mt. Norman and Castle Rock (see details soon)
26th August	MEETING	Illustrated talk by Mrs. I. Chapman Confessions of a Bird Watcher 8 p.m. C.W.A. Rooms.

CONTRIBUTIONS.

OF MACROPODS AND MEN.

The Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club has gone from strength to strength since its inception eight months ago, with an average attendance of 40 at Club meetings and 45 on the field excursions, stated Mr. Tom Chapman, President of the Club, as the Annual Meeting held in the C.W.A. room on July 22nd.

An enthusiastic audience, having elected the new committee then enjoyed an excellent talk given by Dr. Kirkpatrick, the Chief Fauna Officer with the Department of Primary Industries in Queensland. Dr. Kirkpatrick, who is based on the Hermitage Research Station near Warwick, is an authority on marsupials and has studied kangaroo ecology for the past ten years.

Much of his work has been connected with Fauna surveys for the major regions of the State, an essential operation in order to assess the true situation regarding fauna populations and distribution. The magnitude of this task can be imagined from the vastness of the State, with an area of 670,00 sq. miles.

With the exception of a few peculiar habits, such as the Granite Belt, most of the mammals and birds of Queensland are widely distributed throughout the State. This, together with the fact that vast areas of the State are virtually uninhabited, means that most species are relatively safe.

Improved pastures and watering places result in increased numbers of the larger marsupials. However, some of the smaller animals, such as the rock wallabies and the little rat kangaroo are unable to compete with sheep.

Predators, such as foxes, feral cats and dingoes, are always of low density because they adapt their rate of reproduction to suit the prey population. They are incapable by their own organisation, of completely wiping out their prey.

Dr. Kirkpatrick pointed out that there are many gaps in our knowledge which organisations such as the Stanthorpe

Field Naturalist Club can help to fill. Only ~~two~~ years ago a midget possum was found at Mount Buffalo in Victoria which was previously only known as a fossil specimen. Very little is known about the native Australian rodents. The paradise parrot is supposed to be extinct in this area but no one really knows for sure.

Dr. Kirkpatrick ended a fascinating talk by making a plea for the preservation of as many habitats as possible. Conservation needs support, but this should be based on knowledge rather than pure ~~emotional~~ emotion.

CONTRIBUTION BY Z. NEWMAN

During a recent holiday we visited a number of places which would be of interest to any lapidary enthusiast.

First and most fascinating was Lightening Ridge which is only 350 miles from here over good roads ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ - unless it happens to be raining. In that case I understand the roads around the Ridge are impassable and one can get neither in nor out. A great deal has been written about this opal mining town but no glowing description or printed word could convey the special atmosphere. We happened to be there, when the much publicised "Red Robin" opal was found in a very promising new field and everyone seemed to be running a high temperature brought on by opal fever. We thoroughly enjoyed the hopeful air of excitement. There are other interesting facets not often noted- Even in the Autumn I found quite a number of wild flowers new to me and there is a wealth of bird life. We were told there are more varieties of parrots in the area than in any other part of N.S.W.

Near Brunswick Head two other types of opal are to be found. One is known as Tintenbar Opal - called after the Shire. Its exhibits good colour but soon dries out and crazes because of excessive water content and is therefore only useful as a mineral specimen. I was told this opal could be found in cliffs at Skennars Head but although I found blue patch no colour came my way. Near Mullumbimby opal has been reported for the first time anywhere in the world found in cavities of obsidian. Peach Mountain, which is one of the picturesque scenic tours of the hinterland, not only has a Forestry Commission Lookout topping it but has massive chunks of obsidian beside the road and at least I collected some of these.

On our way home we came via Southport and Mt. Tamborine so we could investigate the Jasper farm. This undoubtedly is a delightful and practically toil free method of farming. All you do is collect a fee at the bottom and the customer climbs the steep hill side via a banana plantation and a rock strewn creek bed. He does all the hard work of choosing

and gathering the fancied specimens, stands frustrated before the rare pink colour still part of a massive mountain of jasper, and then staggers back heavily laden with his swag of ornamental rock. I just can't wait for the day when people queue up to cart away the granite so liberally strewn on our properties - and pay for the privilege.

I'M FINE! THANK YOU

There is nothing the matter with me,
I'm as healthy as I can be.
I have arthritis in both my knees
And when I talk I talk with a wheeze,
My pulse is weak, and my blood is thin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'M in.
Arch supports I have for my feet,
Or I wouldn't be able to keep on the street,
Sleep is denied me night after night,
But every morning I find I'm all right.
My memory is failing, my head's in a spin
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.
The moral is this as my tale I unfold,
That for you and me who are growing old,
It's better to say "I'M fine" with a grin
Than to let folk know that shape we are in,
How do I know that my youth is all spent?
Well, my "Get up and go" has got up and went.
But I really don't mind when I think with a grin,
Of all the grand places my "Get up" has bin,
Old age is golden I've heard it said,
But sometimes I wonder as I get into bed.
With my eyes in the drawer, my teeth in a cup,
My eyes on the table until I wake up.
Ere sleep overtakes me, I say to myself,
"Is there anything else I could lay on the shelf?"
When I was young my slippers were red,
I could kick my heels over my head.
When I was older my slippers were blue,
But I could still dance the whole night through.
Now I am old my slippers are black,
I walk to the store and puff my way back.
I get up each morning and dust off my wits
And pick up the paper and read the "Obits",
If my name is still missing I know I'm not dead,
So I have a good breakfast and go back to bed.

A. Wilkinson.

Even if you feel like this you can still join the
Naturalist Club outings - Editor.

NOTES AND REMINDERS

A list of financial members will be published in the SEPTEMBER magazine. Please pay your subs NOW and so make sure of your copy of our magazine.

Editor.

VERY IMPORTANT

DETAILS FOR MOUNT NORMAN - GIRRAWEE WALK THROUGH- 23RD AUGUST.

Convening Time 8.45 am. Stanthorpe Park opposite Civic Centre.

Setting Off Time 9.00 am.

Route To Eukey via Storm King Dam Road.

Just after passing Eukey on the Eukey-Ballandean road is a road that runs off to the left. This cuts across and joins the back road to Wyberba - distance 2 miles approximately.

About 1 mile along this road there is a track leading off to the left through a wire gate. Distance along this road about four miles and this joins up eventually with the Wallangarra Mt. Norman road. This road is though private property, had gates, one of which is locked, but the key can be obtained from the owner. The road is a bush road but is well formed and apart from a couple of creek crossings, with hard bottoms which can be negotiated carefully, is of quite good quality. The car convoy will stop at the Old Mt. Norman turn off.

Here the energetic ones set off to climb Mt. Norman and after performing this, rather than retrace steps, continue on to and past Castle Rock coming out at Girraween. Estimated distance 3 - 4 miles, estimated time 3 - 4 hours.

Mt. Norman, the highest point in the Granite Belt (4156') only 24' lower than Bald Rock which is in New South Wales., is one massive rock sitting on top of acres and acres of rocky shoulders. Progress to Mt. Norman is straightforward with a pinch before the base. The mountain can be climbed only from the South-west corner and climb is reasonably easy and quite safe.

Points of interest at Mt. Norman are Eye of the Needle, caves, large displaced rocks, wildflowers plus the view.

After climbing Mt. Norman, as crow flies to Castle Rock and Girraween. Mainly good going.

Equipment required - good shoes, camera, long trousers or slacks because ~~xxxxx~~ breaks in rock shoulders feature a very prickly Leptospermum. Also hikers may feel like food and drink as a reward on top of mountain so bring along a rucksack for provisions.

For those who only do the car trip into the Mt. Norman turn off, points of interest along the way are:-

- (1) Short walk to Aztec Temple where Bald Creek goes underground.
- (2) Rock slide at Racecourse Creek where displaced granite boulders have smashed their way through eucalyptus trees.
- (3) Very interesting rock stainings at McMeniman's Rock s and elsewhere where run off water has left ironstains behind.
- (4) Rocks, rocks, rocks, Particularly outstanding is one huge rock seen from near Racecourse Creek crossing, as yet unnamed.
- (5) Wombat country. I know of one permanent wombat hole with a wombat resident, but wombats on Bill McCosker's property may be more accessible.
- (6) Wildflowers - excellent spot for flowers in the season, particularly at Mt. Norman turn off. Drought would have some effect, but such flowers as, Boronias, Flannel Flower, Smoke Bush, Assorted Bush Peas, Wattles, Wild Hops, Trigger Plants, Ground Orchids, Hibbertia, Eristemon, Leucopogon, Comesperma, Epacris, Hakea and Dampiera normally abound in season.

Transport arrangements will have to be made at the Wyberba back road and also at Mt. Norman turn off so that hikers can be picked up at Girraween. Normal way to Girraween is retrace the way to Wyberba back road and then down the escarpment to Girraween.

Road traversed to Mt. Norman if continued will bring cars out at Wallangarra. It used to be an atrocious road, and it could not be recommended at his stage, but I understand it has been improved a lot lately.

BRIAN DODD.