

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB.

P.O. BOX 154.
STANTHORPE, Q., 4380.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 1978-1979.

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MEETINGS.- 4th. WEDNESDAY of each MONTH at C.W.A. ROOMS at 8 P.M.

OUTINGS.- Each SUNDAY PRECEDING the FOURTH WEDNESDAY of the Month.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS.

SINGLE- \$3.00

FAMILY- \$4.00

AIMS OF THE CLUB

1. TO STUDY ALL BRANCHES OF NATURAL HISTORY.
2. PRESERVATION OF THE FLORA AND FAUNA OF QUEENSLAND.
3. ENCOURAGEMENT OF a SPIRIT OF PROTECTION TOWARDS NATIVE BIRDS
ANIMALS AND PLANTS.
4. TO ASSIST WHERE POSSIBLE IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.
5. TO PUBLISH A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER.

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MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING WEDNESDAY 28th. MARCH 1979.Present 20Apologies. 2.

The President extended a welcome to all the members and visitors who were present.

Minutes:- It was moved by Mrs. Mc. Allister and seconded by Mr. Lightfoot that the minutes as per the March Magazine be taken as read. Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:-Inward Correspondence.

1. Two Press Statements from National Parks and Wildlife.
2. International Parks Tour Information.. Tony Groom.
3. The Centre for Continuing Education.
4. Monash. University, Five day Seminar 21st.-25th. May. on "Mosses and the Liverworts"
5. N.P.A. Vol. 49 No. 2.
6. "Urimburra" (Chinchilla Notes)

Outward Correspondence:-

1. 4QS. re outing and the programme.
 2. Mr. Thies re subscription rates.
 3. Mrs. Horton and Dr. Ewart re being guest speakers.
- It was moved by Mrs. Stevenson and seconded by Mr. Lightfoot that the inward correspondence be adopted and the outward endorsed. Carried.

FINANCE:-

Mrs. Archer moved that the credit of \$119.29 be received and that the following accounts be passed for payment, Post Office Box. Acct. \$15.00, Room Rent \$5.00, Magazine postage \$7.35 and Magazine duplication \$6.00. Seconded by Mr. Archer... Carried.

OUTING REPORT:- See written one, over by Colin Hockings.

NEXT OUTING:- Place:- Jolly's Falls and Downstream.

LEADERS:- Tom and Irene Chapman.

Date:- Sunday 22nd. April.

Meeting Place:- 9.00 am. Weerona Park.

NEXT MEETING: DATE:- Wednesday 25th April (Anzac)

Guest Speaker:- Mrs. Helen Horton.

Topic. "Kalkadoon Country" Mt. Isa District.

GENERAL BUSINESS:- Those wishing to attend the Easter Camp being organized by the Queensland Naturalist Club as per March Bulletin or contact the President Mr. Colin Hockings. A few extra notes it will be in the Mt Lindsay Area, Qld-N.S.W. border area is sparsely settled, mountainous, rainforest, open forest, mountain heath, upland swamps providing plenty of strenuous walking if all is to be explored or hours in one location for those with specialised interests. Limited supply of drinking water unless good rains have fallen. Left 1km. beyond Palen Prison Gates on to gravel road and follow Q.N.C. signs.

Following discussion concerning the aims of the club Moved Mrs. Archer seconded Mr. Lightfoot that the club retain for the moment aims as printed in the Magazine.

The Editor, Mrs. Harslett extended thanks to Mr. Ian Jackson and Mrs. Mc. Allister for their contribution towards the duplicating and postage of the Mag. this time under difficult circumstances.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm. Mr. Tom Archer presented a slide programme "Around New Zealand"

Janet Hockings Hon. Sec.

MOUNT MITCHELL OUTING REPORT by COLIN HOCKINGS.

Thirteen people attended the outing on Sunday, 25th. March. to Mount Mitchell. The walk to the summit was made in approximately two and a half hours. On reaching the saddle on the way up, we disturbed two huge Wedge-tailed Eagles which were resting in the grass. In a few minutes they and one other had spiralled to a great height above us, with the aid of updraught air currents and without more than a few wing flaps.

From this point on we observed an abundance of large gold paper-daisy flowers (*Helichrysum bracteatum*). Most people became acquainted with leeches at some stage of the walk, some more closely than others.

Lunch was eaten at the top where we were surrounded by magnificent views. Bell-birds could be clearly heard in the forests far below on the eastern side.

The party descended in small groups and Janet and I were lucky enough to hear a lyre bird mimicing a kookaburra and a parrot. I had heard Lyre-birds many times before but have never been fortunate enough to hear one mimic other sounds.

We all assembled at one of the picnic areas on the western side of the Gap for chat and afternoon tea. Between four and five o'clock the Bell-Birds came lower in the trees till they were in the shrubs around us, giving us a good view of these Noisy-Miner relatives.

The itching of leech and tick bites reminded us of an enjoyable outing for the next couple of days.

Colin Hockings.

GIRRAWEE GETS A SPECIAL MENTION.

On the 9th. April 1979 a special issue of stamps appeared to mark the centenary of National Parks in Australia. Of special interest to us is the fact that a scene from Girrawee is depicted on one of the seven designs used, featuring a National Park from each State in the Commonwealth. I'm sure we are honoured to have our local park to represent Queensland. The others depicted are the Royal Nat. Park (the first in Aust.) Port Campbell, Victoria, Uluru, the Territory and Centre, Flinders Ranges, South Aust. Nambung Nat. Park West Aust. Mount Field, Tasmania.

With the inauguration of a National Park near Sydney N.S.W. in 1879 Australia acknowledged the worth of setting aside of the country for specific purposes of preserving their natural environment. One hundred years later, Australia's first National Park is celebrating its centenary by the issue of a series of stamps on the 9th. April 1979.

"The Australian Stamp Bulletin" has this to say about Girraween. "Outcrops of cooled magma (a type of granite) are one of the most interesting features of Girraween National Park in Queensland. The first white man to visit the area, explorer Allan Cunningham described these in his journal of 1828 as, 'large detached masses of granite of every shape towering above each other and in many instances standing above each other and in many instances standing in

National Park Stamps Cont.

almost tottering positions'. In addition to these outcrops, the wide variety of vegetation, flowering plants and native species makes, "Girraween"... "the place of the flowers", as its aboriginal name translates. Wildflowers thrive in the sandy soil and many of the plants in the Park have limited distribution in Queensland."

We are interested to read this small description of our own Park and acknowledge, with thanks The Australian Stamp Bulletin
Jean Harslett.

LAST MONTHS PROGRAMME.

The programme of Tom and Dot Archer's trip to New Zealand was very instructive, interesting and pictorially attractive presentation. We received probably the most enlightening information on the geology of this geologically recent country, that we have ever had, by Tom. I think all of us who have visited New Zealand, have frequently wished we had a better understanding of geology. Tom shared some of his interest in geology, one of his hobbies and his father's profession, and we thank you for not only giving us a very satisfying programme from the aesthetic angle by your pictures but also a challenge mentally.

THIS MONTHS PROGRAMME:-

Mrs. Helen Horton of Brisbane is kindly coming to Stanthorpe to be our "Guest Speaker" for the April Meeting and we hope there will be a spontaneous response by members for this occasion.

Her topic will be "The Kalkadoon Country". The Kalkadoon tribe inhabited the area surrounding Mt. Isa. They were a tall fine built people known for their fitness and fierceness, and well fitted for the difficult country they lived in. There was a great need to defend their limited waterholes.

Mrs Horton, after a few years residence at Mt. Isa took up the challenge of writing a book for the nature lovers and locals of Mt. Isa. Her book has been held up as an example to other areas as a challenge to them also (and Stanthorpe has not been excluded!!) Her book was inspired by the thought that people living in Mt. Isa needed a guide to their unique flora and fauna, and with a plea to conservation.

There are several local associations with Mrs Horton and with her publication. Firstly she is a sister of Mr. Wally Brooks of Cannon Creek and secondly in her book she was assisted by Janet Hockings Mother and Father. Mr. Wally providing and preparing for print the maps and some slides of his are used in reproduction of wild flowers of the area. The charming and artistic, yet botanically correct drawings throughout the publication are the work of artist-naturalist Betty Mc. Kenzie.

Mrs. Horton's book is an outstanding contribution to the knowledge of the Mt. Isa district and she has been widely praised for the effort involved. Mr. and Mrs. Horton are now resident in Brisbane after 13 years resident in Mt. Isa and have four children.

BIRD OF THE MONTH.

by Mr. Tom Chapman.

THE BELL MINER or BELL BIRD (Manorina melanophrys)

From the name "Manos thin" and "rhinos" nose, if you study the Bell Miner closely it certainly does taper from the head to a very pointy beak, and "Melanos" black and "phrus" brow and certainly it does have a black brow. Thus the scientific name, in so many cases as in this case does give us some identifying points.

The first impression of this bird is basically green, that

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Bird of the Month cont:-

merges into the green foliage, where it spends most of its time. On our outing to Mt. Mitchell we were however able to closely examine many of these birds and found that while the head, back and rump are a dark green, the underparts are much paler, a light yellow-green in fact, the wings and tail are brown, with some yellow edging. Beak and legs are a distinct orange yellow and a patch of orange red behind the eye.

The Cunningham's Gap area is obviously a very suitable habitat for Bell Miners and their tinkling bell calls are nearly always heard when approaching the Gap by road from either direction, and so much so that one gully on the eastern approach is appropriately named Bell Bird Gully. In addition to the South-East Queensland mountain areas they range right through the coastal mountains areas to Victoria and are common in some Melbourne suburbs.

Bell Miners are honeyeaters but their diet probably consists more of insects than honey, a very feasible idea as the two generally occur together. During our observations they were very busy in the tops of flowering eucalyptus enjoying nectar with insects or insects with nectar.

In addition to the well-known bell-like call, which is a combination of notes made by several birds and which no doubt is for the purpose of keeping in touch with other members of the colony. We found that they had at least two calls..two other calls. When disturbed and because of the antics of a Rufous Fantail many of them were down around track level. They uttered a harsh irascible screech very similar to a Noisy Miner. It was not hard to guess what they meant by it.

The other call and one which I had not heard them making before, was a soft chattering that reminded me of the noise made by Wood Swallows on the wing. Any thoughts on the purpose of this call and have other members heard it?

The normal breeding season seems to be June to November but can be almost any time of the year, no doubt depending on the season.

The nest is cup-shaped, made of twigs, grass and bark matted with cob-webs and lined with fibrous material. It is suspended from a fork in a small tree, sometimes only a few feet from the ground. Eggs are pale pink, with brown, red and purple spots. Usually two or three eggs are laid but often suffer through the attention of Pallid and Fantail Cuckoos.

Next time you go through the Gap slow down and appreciate the musical call of the black browed bird with the / thin nose. Better still stop and have a "cuppa" in the picnic area to the "Symphony Of Bells".

Tom Chapman.

BIRDS OF THE MOUNT MITCHELL OUTING. by TOM CHAPMAN.

A variety of habitat ranging from heavy moist (leech infested) rainforest through to open forest, "grass-tree" slopes and stages between makes the Mount Mitchell area a suitable environment for a wide range of birds. During the outing on Sunday 25th. March, we didn't see as many birds as we had expected (excuses excuses) but what we did hear and see added greatly to the enjoyment of the day.

BIRDS OF MOUNT MITCHELL Cont.

As we entered the rain forest at the Gap we could hear pigeons calling in the tree tops and also a distorted cat-bird-like call which our President assured us was a Rifle Bird. Despite patient searching unfortunately we weren't able to locate the bird we were so anxious to see.

As usual in heavy rainforest apart from the friendly little White Browed Scrub Wrens who scratched around virtually at our feet bird sighting was mainly restricted to fleeting shadows or the sound of flapping wings or a human saying "what was that?". One of these maybe sightings was probably a Green Winged Pigeon (anyway that's my story and I'd stick to it.) One indisputable sighting though was a pair of very readily recognisable Top-Knot Pigeons in the top of a very tall tree, a fruit laden Eugenia. These large pigeons of various shades of grey with unusually large, conspicuous, knob-like crest were obviously enjoying to the full the ample supply of edible berries and the thick layer of beautiful purple fruit that littered the ground beneath the tree indicated that it was a popular smorgasbord for the fruit eating birds of the rainforest.

Where the track emerged from the rainforest into open Eucalyptus birds immediately became see-able. In this area we saw Red-Browed Finches (didn't notice any non red browed birds) a most elegant Golden Whistler proudly displaying his bright yellow and black ski-vvy with high white collar, thornbills, the ever active Grey Fantail, Grey Thrush (with his large currant-like eyes) a Yellow Robin and a solitary Kookaburra. In the next small gully a sheltered pool provided a safe drinking place for New Holland Honeyeaters and several timid birds we could not identify.

On circling the peak on the west side with views of the Downs over the top of Eucalyptus scrub, with darker splashes of rain forest we heard the characteristic call of Currawongs, so appropriate to the area, and the wailing screech of a Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoo. Without seeing the latter we could visualize them clumsily flopping around the tree tearing off strips of bark in search of grubs or crunching the Casuarina "cones" and eating the seeds. Likewise we had a mind's eye picture of what must surely be one of the laziest flyers of the bird world. To me they always seem to be trying to see how far they can travel between wing flaps, only lazily flapping often enough to stop them literally falling out of the sky. While on their tired-looking journey ~~they can~~ I have the feeling that their eerie call is taking about all the energy they can spare, leaving very little for the mechanics of flying.

On entering a heavy patch of rainforest on the southern slope Lewin Honeyeaters, so suitably clothed in rain forest green, called from the trees. Irene was sure their loud ringing notes were saying "I can see a leech" but next day we realised it was, "Look at the little ticks".

From this area some members of the party heard a Lyre Bird doing his full range of bird calls in a gully towards Spicers Gap and wished they could hang-glide across to where that wonderful mimic was having his own concert. (It is interesting to note that this would be the Albert Lyrebird (*Melanura alberti*) which has a very limited distribution in the Border Ranges of Queensland and N.S.W. and though so close never overlaps with the species seen in the Border Ranges in the Stanthorpe area).....
(So full and interesting are Tom's notes that I'll not cut them but continue them in full in the next issue... Jean Harslett Ed.