

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB.

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

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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 23rd. MAY 1979.

Present 16

Apologies 9.

The President extended a welcome to all present with a special welcome to the guest speaker and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. D. Hockings.

MINUTES:- It was moved by Mrs. J. Mc. Cosker and seconded by Mr. D. Lightfoot that the minutes as per the May Magazine be taken as read. Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:-

Inward Correspondence:-

1. 'Australian Plants at Risk' Booklet.
2. Richmond Valley Nat. Club Bulletin.
3. Contact
4. Urimburr. Vol 13 nos. 4 and 5.
5. Warwick Walker No. 2.
6. Habitat
7. Australian Post.
8. Three Press Statements Nat. Parks and Wild Life Service.

Outward Correspondence:-

1. 4QS.
2. Mrs. H. Horton
3. Mr. C. Curtis re programme.

It was moved by Mrs. J. Harslitt and seconded by Mrs. Joan Stevenson that the inward correspondence be adopted and the outward endorsed..... Carried.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT. Mrs. Archer moved that the credit of \$20.82 be received and that the following accounts be passed for payments C.W. Rooms Rent \$5.00; Magazine Postage \$6.62. Magazine Printing \$3.00. Seconded by Mrs. A. Mc. Allister and carried.

NEXT OUTING:- PLACE. Mrs. Mc. Cosker's property where we will be shown an aboriginal well, interesting caves and if lucky a Lyrebird or two.

LEADERS:- Mr. R. Mc. Cosker and Mrs. D. Mc. Cosker

DATE:- Sunday June 24th.

MEETING PLACE:- Weeroona Park, 9.30am. Bring a picnic lunch and water that can be carried on the walk.

NEXT MEETING:- Wednesday June 24th.

Guest Speaker:- Either Mr. S. Curtis who will be speaking on Lyrebirds or Mr. Brian Mc. Donagh who will be presenting a programme on Conservation. Final arrangements will be announced on 4QS. in "Around the Ridges".

OUTING REPORT:- In the absence of Mr. Walker, the President reported on the monthly outing to Wellington Rock in the Tenterfield area. Club Members were joined by members of the Tenterfield Camera Club Members and under the leadership of Mr. Bob Perry we all had a most energetic and enjoyable day. Several of the more enthusiastic climbed the ropes and rope ladder to the very top where their efforts were rewarded by the magnificent view.

GENERAL BUSINESS:-

It was moved by Mrs. Stevenson and seconded by Mr. Archer that we offer travelling expenses to any guest speaker who

MINUTES Cont. is required to travel.... Carried.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.35 pm and the Guest Speaker Mr. David Hockings presented a slide programme on "Pests Parasites and Predators of Native Plants. Janet Hockings.

Report on the Programme by Mr. David Hockings.

The Club was treated to a programme of the highest order for the June meeting and it was a pity the attendance of members was so poor. Nice to the President of the Garden Club there.

Mr. Hockings has done more extensive study in this aspect, the study of Pests, Parasites and Predators on Australian Native Plants than anyone else in Australia. His book on the subject, now in the hands of the printers, is eagerly awaited by growers of Australian native plants, all over the Commonwealth. Mr. Hockings, during his lecture showed us a number of the pictures, will be included as illustrations in the book. Some of the pests are spectacular and handsome to look at. Others are very small pests, and took a great deal of patience, skill, ingenuity and even honey !!, to photograph.

Mr. Hockings made a very specific point, that the spray can was not always the best way to control garden pests. Indeed he strongly recommended a very close and regular inspection of what was actually happening in the precincts of your garden. Frequently nature was working at its own balance, with perhaps a little help from the gardener, and a couple of bricks as good "sprinklers" the balance.

He said often at the first sight of aphids on the roses, spray was the order of the day, killing also the predators, which rapidly build up in numbers too if given a tiny chance.

He has been called out to Brisbane gardens to advise how to kill all the "little flies or wasps" flying around, which are in fact laying eggs in the lawn grubs as fast as they can and will provide a splendid control of an underground pest, not so easy to attack in other ways. However people are often very hard to convince.

He alerted us to the added interest provided by observing all these often unobserved happenings in our gardens. I am sure he triggered off thoughts in all the true garden lovers' minds. Mr. Hockings has always shared his knowledge and love of plants so freely with anyone who is interested. He has the happy knack of making his scientific knowledge available to all levels of interest, and exciting ones interest too. This was very apparent in this excellent presentation, and emphasized by the tremendous flow of questions.

Mr. and Mrs. Hockings made a special trip up from Brisbane, to give us this programme, and had to rush back to other commitments.

Thank You!! David and Olive.

Jean Harslett.

BIRD OF THE MONTH by MR. TOM CHAPMAN.

The Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*)

The warm welcome we received from a pair of Scarlet Robins as we turned into the forestry enroute to Wellington Rock, made them the obvious choice for the "Bird of the Month".

The jet black throat, scarlet breast & prominent white cap of the male made identification easy, and the appearance of the fem.

BIRD OF THE MONTH Cont:-

-ale, left little doubt as to which of the several of beautiful robins they were. When the male flitted from branch to branch, the white stripe on wings & tail, a very definite flash of black & white is another identification point of Scarlet Robins.

The female builds the attractive cup nest, the male provides material, but she is the architect & builder. The male also provides food during incubation, probably reasoning that it's a better arrangement than taking a turn on the nest himself! Nests are usually built in the fork of a tree, composed of strips of bark, moss, grass and matted with spider webs, and decorated with lichen, rough bark or charred wood. Breeding occurs between July & Jan. and they've been known to raise up to three broods in a season. Eggs are pale blue or greenish-white, with purple grey or brown markings, forming a thick zone of colour on the larger end. A normal clutch is 3 or 4. Several species of cuckoos lay eggs in scarlet robin's nests, but fortunately there always seems a pair available to move into the area at suitable times of the year. Not only do they stay in a particular locality, but are usually found on a particular tree and even branch. It is this facet of their behaviour, that enables one to produce such a beautiful, practically on demand, that makes the Scarlet Robin a firm favourite of mine.

Tom Chapman.

Mrs. Zaidee Newman has given us a most interesting and I feel unusual article on bird mimicry, and we are delighted to have observations from such a careful and enthusiastic bird watcher.

BIRD MIMICRY. by ZAIDEE NEWMAN.

Although our native birds have their own distinctive calls and songs, quite a number of species are excellent mimics, by far the most famous of these being of course, the Lyrebird. This noted mimic seems able to perfectly reproduce sounds ranging from the calls of other bird species through a wide variety of mechanical sounds, such as saws, engines or even the thud of an axe blow. Several years ago there was an interesting talk about bird calls over the radio and according to this speaker some foreign sounds are apparently passed down through generations of Lyrebirds. To support his theory he told of a Lyrebird on the Dorrigo Plateau N.S.W., who learned to mimic the wail of bagpipes played by a lonely woodcutter at the beginning of the century. Although no Scottish piper has been heard in this remote area since then, the Lyrebirds resident there to-day are still producing these unmistakable sounds.

At the other end of the scale we have our small Silver-eye who, along with less desirable habits, is also credited with being a gifted mimic. As his mimicry is performed in a very soft sub-song, it is not so easy to detect. I was elated one day to be in just the right spot, at the right moment to hear a Silver-eye spend about fifteen minutes, very softly but perfectly reproducing the tuneful song of the Reed Warbler.

My favourite mimic, however, is a Pied Butcherbird resident on Bribe Island. Last Spring on the island, we usually went to sleep lulled by the mournful but soothing "Morepork" call of the Boobook Owl floating down from the high tree above our caravan. and we were awakened at first light by the joyous fluting call of a Pied Butcherbird. One morning we heard with delight that

BIRD MIMICRY by ZAIDEE NEWMAN Cont:-

the two birds were collaborating with each other, first the "Morepork" immediately followed by a melodious carol from the Butcherbird, the combination having a distinctly antiphonal effect. We recorded this duet and played it again and again, with great pleasure. Several mornings we heard the same duet again, and on the principle that you can't have too much of a good thing I again ventured out in the pre-dawn with my cassette recorder, undeterred by an enthusiastic escort of hungry mosquitoes. This time, however, I received a startling surprise. The Butcherbird obviously noting that it had an appreciative audience, left the shelter of his tree and landed on the wires overhead to make sure I missed nothing in sight or sound. It was then that I had to persuade myself that my eyes did not deceive me and that I had only one songster, both calls coming from the one throat.

Just recently, again at Bribie Island I was again standing in the shade of a Moreton Bay Fig sheltering from the mid-day heat, and idly listening to the medley of bird calls from above. Figbird and Starling calls predominated mixed with the twitterings of smaller birds and an occasional Butcherbird carol. Suddenly a very soft "Morepork" alerted me and looking up I found my tree-ful of birds represented solely by a very dapper black and white bird who looked down at me with what appeared to be a most self satisfied and smug expression - an expression which could easily be interpreted as "Ha!" fooled you again didn't I?

Zaidee Newman.

WHITE THROATED TREECREEPER NOTE by ZAIDEE NEWMAN.

Do Whitethroated Treecreepers make a habit of sleeping indoors if the opportunity offers? Last year we had one who seemed to spend most of his nights in our garage and this year a friend has reported that a small bird is in their garage at night, quite often. It has at last been identified as a White-throated Treecreeper.

This Autumn we often find a bird of this species in our bedroom and as long as we go quietly to bed pretending not to notice him, he makes no attempt to leave. I must admit though he wakes very early and shows his gratitude for the nights lodging by most assiduously searching our very grey and weathered aerial pole, just in case it is being chewed down by some thoughtless insect. All the time assuring our attention by his continuous and characteristic loud piercing whistle.

Zaidee Newman.

WHERE WERE THE PELICANS GOING ? by Tom Chapman.

During the outing to Wellington Rock, we observed 11 Pelicans behaving in, what seemed to me a very 'un-Pelican-like' way.

They were first seen making hard work of raising their heavy bodies above tree level, with short glides between laborious flapping of wings. They appeared to be rather aimlessly travelling around and around, but after some time, it became

WHERE WERE THE PELICANS GOING ? Cont:-

obvious that they were gaining height. Not only were they gaining height but they were doing so with less effort, and as I watched they apparently found what they were presumably looking for, nature's lift in the sky. Fascinated I watched as they went round and round, and up and up, now with a tilt of the body, an occasional flap of wing, but basically with no apparent movement at all. Just a setting of wings to the right angle and the air currents did the rest.

Many times I have watched and admired and marvelled as Wedge-tailed Eagles have disappeared overhead with effortless soaring, but to see eleven such ungainly birds as Pelicans do it equally well, was fascinating.

When they were quite invisible to the naked eye and just specks through binoculars I couldn't help wondering what height they reached and why they had gone into an environment so different from where they are normally seen. Were they gaining height preparatory to a long distant flight, or to new feeding grounds, or some inland breeding area ?..... Or why ?

Tom Chapman.

NEXT OUTING

Just briefly winding up, Robin McCosker our Leader for the outing makes a couple of observations for our interest. From his well filed bulletins he is able to tell us that it is nine years since he led an outing to this area. Thus it is 1970 since we had an official outing to the area, so well worth a return visit. He also says, that as an alternative, and if there are enough energetic fans, to return another rougher route, he will gladly lead them. Of course provision will be made for those who prefer to follow down the creek and a modest track.

FRONT PAGE FEATURING

It was indeed, pleasing to see the youngest member of the party, who went to Wellington Rock last month, get a front page featuring in the local paper, The Stanthorpe Border Post, with his black and white study of Wellington Rock. Congratulations to 11 year old Geoffrey Walker.

The outing led by our "walking" leader Errol Walker and our "daredevil pinnacle top climber", Bob Perry proved a very pleasant, challenging and good fellowship outing. Pleasant, from the open forest, tree-ferned glades and gentle undulations we all enjoyed. Challenging, for those eight who really reached the very highest point, or those who were within a few feet of doing so, and yet even to this point had to deal with a few personal fears, and decisions to extend themselves above just the straight forward, and yet enjoy their own little personal glow of achievement. Good fellowship, because we were joined not only by our Nats. Club Members, but members of the Stanthorpe Camera Club and the Tenterfield Camera Club. My goodness, Geoffrey, how did you put it over them ! Each member enjoyed these new contacts, and a walk through a deep-ly ferned spur gave us a lovely isolated view of the "Wellington hat" shaped formation. Just for the record it was the 104th time that Bob Perry had climbed the rock, and of course we would not have had the privilege without his gear and expertise, & our admiration for his infinite care was high.

Jean Harslett.