



18 MAY 1981



THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST



Monthly Newsletter of the
Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club



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

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

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 1980 - 1981

PRESIDENT	Robin McCosker
VICE PRESIDENTS	Colin Hockings John O'Donnell
SECRETARY	Graham Greenup
TREASURER	Dot Archer
NEWSLETTER EDITOR	Jean Harslett
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FAUNA OFFICER	Brian McDonagh
GEOLOGY OFFICER	Maurice Passmore
YOUTH OFFICER	Ruth Greenup
BUSHWALKING OFFICER	Ray Marsden
<u>COMMITTEE</u>	Frank Wilkinson Lyle Thompson David Pfrunder Tom Archer Desley McDonagh Jean Harslett

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 - \$ 4.00

FAMILY - \$ 6.00

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.

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING WEDNESDAY 22nd April 1981

Present 20..... Apologies 8....(As per attendance book)

Motion:-The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed taken as read, moved by Mr Frank Wilkinson and seconded by Mr. Lyle Thompson..... Carried.

New Members:- President Robin welcomed two new members namely, Mrs. Pat Priest and Mrs. Pat Whelan.

Correspondence:-

Inward:-1. N.P.A. News, April, journal of the National Parks Assoc. of Qld.

2. Newsletter of the Richmond Valley "Naturalist Club

Outward:-1. Letter to Mr David Raff expressing appreciation for his address at the February meeting.

2. Letter to Laurie Jeffrey thanking him for helping to arrange and research the March outing to the Texas area.

3. Letter to Miss Hitchner thanking her for allowing access to her property and especially for the afternoon tea.

4. To Mr. Roy Buchanan of Lamington indicating that we would like to make a weekend excursion to Westray's Grave on June 20th. and 21st.

5. Two letters to 4QS, requesting broadcast of outing and meeting activities.

Motion. Moved by Mr. Errol Walker and seconded by Mrs. Jean Harslett that the inward correspondence be received and the outward endorsed... Carried.

Financial Report:-

March 25th. 1981.. Bank Balance..... \$259.69

Receipts March Rent Collection..... \$4.00

\$263.69.

Payments:-March 25th. Rent on P.O.Box. \$16.00

March " " Magazine Covers. \$49.22

March " " Room Rent..... \$6.00

March " " Magazine Postage \$5.10

March " " David Raff's Travelling

Expenses \$10.00

\$86.32.

\$177.37

Accounts for Payment.

International Colour Productions..... \$32.89

Mrs Janet Hockings..... \$5.30

Stanthorpe Q.C.W.A.

Stanthorpe Rover Scouts Dup. Oct, Nov. \$10.00

Petty Cash for the Secretary... \$10.00

Motion:- Moved Mrs. Dot Archer and seconded by Mrs. Joan Stexeson that the treasurers report be adopted and the accounts passed for payment... Carried.

MINUTES OF THE APRIL MEETING CONT.

OUTING REPORT:- A report of the outing of April 2 12th. to Horan's Gorge was given by Robin Mc.Cosker, in the absence of the leader Mr. Ray Marsden. Some 29 adults and 10 children attended. A long walk led to a destination well worth the effort. A bark ti-tree gully as well as an area of ferns was the home of a rose robin. The casts of the powerful owl were found, but not the owl this time. Thank you Ray and Millie.

NEXT OUTING:- Errol Walker will lead us on a through walk at Girraween Nat. Park on May 24th. An early departure time from Weerona Park of 8am. is necessitated. The walk is anticipated to take 6-7 hours. It will be through elevated granite country and except for the first half hour the walk is mostly downhill. Packed lunch and water will be required. Return transport to the vehicles will be arranged. R

NEXT MEETING:- C.W.A. Rooms Wednesday 27th. May.

SUBJECT:- Mr. John O'Donnell is to present a programme which is entitled "Arid Zone Pastures".

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

REPORT ON THE APRIL PROGRAMME by Mr. G GREENUP.

After the meeting we were entertained by a most interesting programme entitled "Designs in Nature", presented by Jean Harslett.

The talk emphasized the point that there is a purpose behind all of nature's designs; nothing is haphazard. A carefully chosen selection of slides illustrated this point. It is obvious why the eggs of plovers and other ground nesting birds are coloured, but I for one had not considered why they are sharply pointed: this enables them to lock together better, and thus they are unlikely to roll should the female have to leave the nest in haste. On the other hand birds with more elaborate nests do have more rounded eggs.

Slides showing several different types of termite nests were shown, there are reasons for them to be so shaped, for example the "magnetic" nests of one northern Australian species are positioned so as to receive a minimum of tropical sunshine. The variability of termites was also demonstrated in slides showing their utilization of horse droppings and spinifex. One species had utilized spinifex seeds in the "glue" which sticks the building material of the channels of the nests together; another had small 'nests' built around spinifex blades.

The fruiting bodies of several fungi were captured by the camera, including the fungi involved in the commensal relationship, with termites. The fruiting body of this species is uncommonly seen here, though the vegetative phase is co-essential to every termite.

Many insects and their larvae are designed to be also invisible, while in their normal environment, moved to another they stand out like beacons.

May 1981.

REPORT ON THE APRIL PROGRAMME. Cont.

Other insects are 'protected' by other means, some moths have wings similiar in shape to those of wasps, and also body colouration, is that of wasps, so potential predators stay clear. Other species of moths have fearful 'eyes' on their wings, or caterpillars have 'artificial' eye patterns as warnings to keep clear.

Thank you Jean, once again, it has been a privelege to hear you speak.

Graham Greenup.

THE HORAN'S GORGE OUTING

BY Millie Marsden

The outing on 12th. April 1981 to Hporan's Gorge was attended by twenty-one adults and eight children. It was a perfect Autumn day and ideal for bush walking. The group left their cars at the gate in Mr. Rollie Forbes property and had a quick cup of tea before setting off, complete with lunch for a days walk out into the gorge. It was very pleasant walking for the first hour, and there were plenty of things of interest to be seen. As is usual, some were interested in the plants, others in rock formations, some in the bird life.

Everyone took time off from the hike to watch the bees at work in a tree across the gully. The columns of wax in the hive were clearly visible owing to the tree being old and splitting and its an unusual sight to see the hive so exposed, and its accompanying problems which must be presented with the fairly sensitive temperature control, which is necessary. Several members took time to investigate the 'milky' quartz reef in the area, there being several marked outcrops. Though of gold bearing type, no gold was found or the Nats might still be out there!! Wild flower enthusiasts were heard to promise a visit a visit in the Spring, to see if they live up to expectation.

We finally arrived at an old clearing, which had been a tomato patch in the 1920's. Two very large 'Radiata' pine trees bore evidence of man's presence in that time. Various methods of estimating height of trees were put into practice. Was 98 feet the estimate? (After the discussion at the previous outing to Texas, and the discussion on "The biggest Ironbark tree, it was thoughtful of Ray to look up methods of estimation both by bushmen and scouts and to bring documentation. Thank you Ray for an interesting little interlude. Ed.)

Not far past this point, the clearing area we stopped for lunch in the shade of a delightful group of very large paper barks. The children enjoyed themselves on the sloping trunks of these trees, while their elders were content to sit in the shade, eat swop stories of nature (of-course!)

It was in this area on the pre-outing where we witnessed a wonderful happening. As we entered this stand of trees a ring-tailed possum plummeted to the ground at our feet, while with a great flurry of feathers, a large bird flew off from above. We found upon investigation, that the possum was headless, and our first thought was that the bird was a wedge-tailed eagle. However it was determined during the outing, that

HORAN'S GORGE OUTING by MILLIE MARSDEN Cont.

that the bird was more likely to have been a Powerful Owl. Several have been seen in the area before, the habits all pointed to ~~the~~ this being a Powerful Owl. One keen member retrieved "casts" which, included fur small marsupial bones, and of typical shape and size to those of the latter bird. It was generally conceded % that "our" bird, which we didn't really see properly, was not an eagle, after all. This group of Melaleucas were very large for this species, obviously very old, and with ribbons of bark were quite spectacular. This area was an ideal spot for the children to stay with a supervisor, while the rest of the party went on further. Incidentally this species of Melaleuca has come in for some attention as yielding valuable essential oils. (*M.alternifolia*.) During the time spent in the lunch-time area bird life was quite prolific, and the Rose Robin gave special delight.

The group followed the gully for some distance and then took % the left fork which brought us through a glade of ferns. It was quite narrow and fairly steep climbing to get out at the top. There were 8 different ferns in this area, Mountain bracken and maiden-hair being in abundance. The view from the top was somewhat dissappointing, and time was running out so we retraced our steps.

We have been unable to find out why it is called Horan's Gorge, any light on the subject ?

As we passed the home of Mr. Forbes he delighted the children, (and others) by taking them on a visit to his turkeys, piglets and puppies. Our thanks to Mr. Forbes for his co-operation to all who came on the outing.

FLORA REPORT ON HORAN'S GORGE by DORE Mc.COSKER.

The rich colours of deciduous trees & vines throughout the district are proclaiming Autumn, & as we walked through the Gorge the display of lovely orange capsules on *Peltospermum* sp. and the wine red clusters of seeds decorating the *Busaria spinosa*, also signified the culmination of their productive cycle for this season.

The 'Flower of the Month' would have to be the only one in flower, ~~flower~~ and just commencing its dainty though inconspicuous display, the ground orchid, *Acianthus exsertus* (or the Gnat Orchid because of its insect like appearance) The spike of about 12 flowers rises on a red stem from a single basal leaf, green on both sides, which is fed from an edible tuber a couple of inches under the surface. For the sake of the orchid, which like all orchids is protected, perhaps it should be said, edible but not very tasty.

We noted about 8 different ferns, 'geebungs' (*Persoonia*) 'five-corners' (*Styphelia*) were in all stages from dormant, flowering & fruiting. Two species of a shrub, which later will bear golden heads of flower, *P.lanigera* & *P.elliptica* were predominant. Blooms of 'bluebells' (*Wahlenbergia*) everlastings (*Helichrysum*), *Correa reflexa* and *Brachycomes* were seen and discussed.

FLORA REPORT Cont:-

Where sheep had been fed there was a well grown specimen of Paterson's Curse or Salvation Jane, or most properly known as *Echium lycopsis*. The plant I had seen covering the fields around Warwick & believed to be Paterson's Curse is actually *Verbena rigidum* (another common name confusion). A similar plant I have admired is *Heliotropium amplexicaule*, & have allowed them to bloom in my garden, accepting it could get out of hand.

Dore McCosker.

EUKEY TO GIRRAWEEEN THROUGH WALK..SUNDAY 24/5/81.. 8 am.DEPART.

Leader E.Walker Phone 812008.

This walk should show most of us an area little seen by the average walker. The natural elevation of the Eukey area (3,800 ft.) will provide us with a walk across some of the high mountain country for approx. 5-7 miles. The energy sapping climb to the heights will be avoided because the exit point at the National Park Headquarters is 1,100 ft. below the starting point and I can promise no difficult climbing. Points of interest will be a 360 degree view from the hill south of Muller's house at Eukey, and the unfamiliar viewpoint of familiar features of Girraween Nat. Park. It will take a while to get the scene in-to perspective. Severe fires have been through this area after which there has been reasonable rain so the walking should be even 'cleaner' than it was on the pre-outing last year. It will be interesting to note the regrowth and observe how the fires can assist or degrade our botanical environment.

If no rain falls during the week prior to the walk there will be no surface water on the ridges so it will have to be carried along with your lunch.

It will be a spectacular walk with plenty of interest for all nature lovers. If 1mph. can be averaged the trek should not tax a person in average to poor condition (like me!)

The day will be fairly full so an 8am. start from Weeroona Park is essential. Our vehicles will be left on private property and return transport for through-walkers has been arranged.

Estimated time of return to the cars is before 5pm.

Please ring me for further details. I would appreciate early advice if any large numbers of visitors are attending so that return transport for walkers can be organized, well in advance.

Errol Walker... Leader.

NOTE TIME OF DEPARTURE FROM WEEROONA PARK IS 8PM. for the May outing. LUNCH and WATER is to be carried and it will be an EIGHT HOUR DAY.

STOP PRESS: The Toowoomba Field Naturalist Club has enjoyed a visit to the Horan's Gorge area, entering via Mr. Peter Watters property. They had the good fortune to observe a Native Bear on this outing, rare on Granite country.

Ray and Millie Marsden are to be commended in arranging the outing to Horan's Gorge, a little known area, and a new acquisition for National Parks, & very topical for us.... Ed.