

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

No. 13

February 1971

P.O. Box 154 St'ee.

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ACTIVITIES

Meetings	4th Wednesday of each month C.W.A. Rooms 8 p.m.
Field Outing	Sunday preceeding 4th Wednesday

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single \$1.00

Family \$1.50

PROGRAMME

Field Outings
Place

Date

Leader

Dr. Roberts Waterhole

21st Feb. 1971

W. Cathcart
& E. Walker

Meetings

Subject

Date

Speaker

Galls

24th Feb. 1971

Mr. P. Grant

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Report on Field OutingQueen Mary Falls Outing - 24th January,

Despite threatening weather, five cars set out from the Falls via Amosfield and Legume. A stop was made along the way to do the scenic walk into Browns Falls. This walk is approximately one mile return trip and traverses rain forest along the creek bank. On the return trip, a passing shower made its presence felt.

Lunch was taken at the Queen Mary Falls Shelter Shed, and afterwards the whole party did the scenic circuit trip. The party consisted of all age groups from less than one year upwards. The walk goes through open forest along the top of the gorge, strikes rain forest at the bottom of the falls before returning to open forest near the car park. The falls had a good flow coming over the top, but not as much as one would have expected from recent rain.

With storms threatening, the party broke up early. Peter Higgins chugged home all the way in second gear, striking a severe storm in the Legume area. Three cars bravely continued on the Falls road, down the Head, returning via White Swamp, Koroeliah, Legume and Killarney.

With weather conditions and time of year mitigating against a large attendance, trip could be classed as moderately successful.

Bird Notes.

The sky was heavily overcast when 20 super-optimists left Stanthorpe shortly after 9 a.m. on Sunday 24th Jan., for the Queen Mary's Falls area.

There were several reasons for the small number, the most obvious being the threatening weather.

Cloudy, stormy weather is usually unfavourable for bird watching and without a real bird expert in the party we didn't expect a big bird list.

En route we saw the common birds that are usually observed when driving in this area, viz.; Blacked-back Magpie, Crow, Galah, Willy Wagtail, Fairy Martin, Noisy Miner, Brown Flycatcher and Starlings.

Strutting along the bank of a dam in their usual pugnacious was were two Spur-winged Plovers while a Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike was easily identified as it flew over us with characteristic undulating flight.

The red and blue flashed of course were Crimson Rosellas, while the "picture Book" birds feeding on the side of the road scarcely deigning to move out of our way were Eastern Rosellas.

And so on to our first stop, Brown Falls.

Brown Falls, which is within easy walking distance of the main Killarney, Queen Mary's Falls road is a most rewarding area for the botanist, the bush lover and the bird watcher. It is hoped another excursion will be made to this area when more members will have the opportunity to appreciate its beauty.

Bird Notes cont'd

A narrow, dry, side gorge with a great variety of trees was alive with birds. Currawongs called in the tops of trees, a Grey Fantail carried out cheeky acrobatic manoeuvres just above my head, a White-eared Honeyeater busy about the endless search for food called to an unseen mate with harsh notes and a yellow Robin, completely unafraid or just plain inquisitive, approached to within a few feet of me.

As storm clouds rolled in and rain began to fall I was forced to turn back. The monotone notes of Pardalotes, the tinkling call of Bell Birds and the musical trill of a white throated Warbler combined to call me back, but the hysterical laughter of a Kookaburra reminded me that I was rapidly becoming a soaked bedraggled sight, so despite the tantalising sound of flapping wings in a Hoop Pine I made for the cars, determined to return in more favourable conditions.

The weather cooperated briefly to allow us to do the Queen Mary's Falls circuit where we saw and heard a melodious Black and White Butcher Bird and an elegant male Blue Wren Fussing amongst his wives and offspring.

On the road to the Head we found a Rat Kangaroo that had been hit by a car and some of our members had their first look at the beautiful small marsupial which, being nocturnal and elusive is seldom seen although probably present in fair numbers in suitable environment.

Despite the possibility of further heavy storms and flooded creeks we decided to go over The Head to the White Swamp area and back through Old Korella. No doubt it was a crazy time to attempt that road but we negotiated it safely and at one stage we were rewarded by the sight of a very large, almost black Wedge-tailed Eagle rising from the road in front of us. Once he gained height and began to soar his effortless upward circling was in direct contrast to laborious "take-off"; without a doubt he belongs to the skies.

On the way back to Killarney and Warwick the electricity wires afforded vantage points for Nankeen Kestrels and Black-shouldered Kites to scan the ground for mice or grasshoppers and for Rainbow Birds and Dollar Birds to launch themselves at insects or to perform intricate aerial manoeuvres.

A Dollar Bird "rolling" silhouetted against storm clouds always says to me "Old. in Summer" thus an enjoyable day finished on an appropriate theme.

Report of Monthly Meeting Held 27th Jan. 1971.

There was a good attendance of 43 people at the meeting. The President reported that the Chinchilla Nats. club held a very successful and interesting weekend camp at Mt. Norman on the 5/6th December. Their members were disappointed that none of our members except the President was able to join them. The Christmas bar-be-que held at the Junction was most enjoyable with a fair attendance of members. Thanks to the McCosker family for their efforts to make this occasion a success.

The finances of the club are at a very low ebb so after discussion it was decided to accept small donations from members. 30 c. per member was thought adequate to cover expenses until the end of this financial year.

Report of Monthly Meeting cont'd.

A suggestion was made that members pick up their magazines instead of having them posted in an effort to save money, however it was decided to continue posting them.

Mr. Percy Grant will be the guest speaker at our next meeting his subject being "Galls". This should be an excellent evening as Mr. Grant has made a detailed study of galls and is besides an expert photographer. This is the last pre-arranged meeting so a committee meeting will be held shortly. Suggestions for outings and meetings would be welcomed by the committee.

This completed the business for the evening and every-one settled down to enjoy a most interesting illustrated talk on National Parks by Mr. Curtis, Officer in-charge of National Parks in the Forestry Department. A more detailed report of this will appear in a later magazine.

Contributions.

Birds in Danger.

Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus)

It may come as a surprise to readers to learn that the Peregrine Falcon is in danger, but over large areas of its cosmopolitan range it has declined and even disappeared. Recently an alarming (though unconfirmed) report declared that the species was no longer breeding in the 48 conjoined states of U.S.A. An important factor involved in this decline was found to be the Organo-Cl Chlorine pesticides which were used extensively in Agriculture. Wide spread publicity which followed the publication of Rachel Carson's "The Silent Spring", backed the findings of scientists, eventually led some governments to place restriction on the use of some of the more toxic pesticides such as Dieldrin.

The Peregrine Falcon was not the only bird to be affected dozens of other species were also found to be contaminated.... but a decline was much more apparent in the Peregrine Falcon than in the others. Birds of prey are susceptible to accumulative poisons, which gradually build up along the food chain to produce a high concentration in the final link- usually a carnivorous animal.

Peregrine falcons and other raptors have a relatively slow breeding rate and consequently any reduction in the population may take many years to re-build. It is for this reason that conservationists all over the world will welcome the recent order by the British Government which bans the unlicensed import of all birds of prey. This is because in recent years all native species have been protected in order to satisfy market demands, dealers have been buying, sometimes illegally, from abroad.

The survival rate of imported birds is low and the consequent drain on the raptor population can be serious. It is to be hoped that this international approach to conservation and protection thrives, and that the Peregrine Falcon eventually re-colonises the areas from which they have disappeared.

From "Birds of the World Magazine"

Contributions cont'dSome Animals of the Malaysian Jungle.

Many of the animals found in the jungles (rain forests) of Malaysia are also common in other parts of the world. In this article I shall only mention a few of those I've come in contact with one way or another and shall later write on other aspects of jungle life.

The Malay Bear is the smallest existing kind of bear, but fully grown ones are powerful and formidable animals. Its food consists mainly of insects and their larvae, and, as they are also extremely fond of the contents of a bees' nest, devouring honey, grubs and all, they are often called Honey Bears. I once had to clean the wounds of a man who had been attacked by one of these and I never wish to see such a case again.

The apes and monkeys are well represented in the jungles. The White-handed Gibbon or Wak-Wak, the Dark-handed Gibbon and the Siamang can be seen swinging among the branches by their long arms. They rarely come down to the ground because they can run only awkwardly holding up their arms to balance themselves. Monkeys are distinguishable from apes as they possess tails. The long-tailed Macaque or Kera eats a variety of foods from plants to crabs; the Pig-tailed Macaque or Brok is longer and so-called because of his short, curly tail. These are sometimes kept as pets and trained to pick coconuts from the high palms. The Leaf-monkeys have longer tails than the Macaque and eat only leaves.

The Insectivores of Malaysia include the shrews, the moles and moon rat and are mainly insect eating. The Moon rat is perhaps the strangest looking these creatures with its long, coarse hair, black on body with white patches on its face. Their feet and tails are half black and half white while their noses are long and pink. It lives mainly on fish caught at night/

Bats of many kinds are found in caves, hollow trees, roof spaces in houses and other similar places. I have made several trips to some of the bigger caves to collect the guano for fertilizing the garden. Deposits which may well have taken hundreds of years to build up. Flying foxes are the largest of the bat family having wing-spans up to four or five feet; while the Hairless bats are probably the most unpleasant looking of the lot with almost naked bodies. The Bamboo bat roosts by day inside hollow bamboos and in order to enable it to crawl in and out of the narrow slit the whole animal, including the skull, is flattened to a remarkable degree.

Deer, especially the Rusa are hunted for meat by all races of people living in Malaysia. The Pelandok (not really a deer but often classed with them) stands only about eight inches and features in many Malay stories rather like Brer Rabbit in North America tales.

The Carnivores found in the jungle range from the tigers and panthers to members of the weasel family containing the smallest specimens of this order. Rodents are numerous and include the porcupines, rats and mice while squirrels are found in great variety.

One of my strangest happenings in the interior of Borneo was being asked to exorcise a "ghost" which was eating the

Some Animals of the Malaysian Jungle cont'd

heads off some chickens. After some research I discovered that one kind of fresh water lizard does just that and by building the chook house up on stilts the trouble could be avoided. So much for ghost stories and also for this brief introduction to animals of Malaysia.

Somewhere near Thulimbah.

Someone stumbles on this specimen a tree, a native of Queensland, but not common to this district What could it be?!

Seedpods and flowers identical to an Eucalyptus but foliage somewhat different. The tree was seen elsewhere some-time back more than ten years ago.

And the memories wandered to a southern N.S.W. township in the Riverina along the Murray River, which has a row of these magnificent trees and then wondering and hoping to see this tree in its natural surroundings one day!!

Here it is 10 miles from Stanthorpe! and since seeing this one, others were observed on the recent Killarney excursion by club members.

The following statistics might be of some help.

It is closely related to the Eucalypt.

Evergreen and beautifully shaped.

Flowers November - December, white in colour.

Native to N.S.W., Qld., and N.T.

Leaves are oval, pointed 4 - 6 inches long and shiny and dark green.

"Down South" cities and country towns use them for avenue - and specimen plantings.

Is a rather fast grower, propagated from seed.

When young somewhat frost tender.

Well what is it? Should one collect some seed and enhance our "Rocky surroundings" even more . !!! ??

The TRISTANIA - CONFERTA (Brush or Queensland Box) is the tree in question.

J. Van Klaveran.

Details of Field Outing. 21st Feb. 1971 to Dr. Robert's Water-hole, Girraween National Park. Leaders E. Walker and W. Cathcart.

Cars will depart in convoy from Stanthorpe Park at 9 a.m. sharp.

What to wear:- Bush clothes, rubber-soled shoes or boots, hat, bring rain coat.

What to bring:- Lunch, swimming gear, knapsack, camera etc.

What we do:- A short walk along a creek bank will bring us to the main attraction and there will be time for those inclined to return to the cars before lunch. For the more adventurous there are some wonderful rock formations nearby and these people may wish to have lunch "along the track". This will be an easy day with lots of interest to be seen within

Details of Field Outing cont'd⁷

a short walking distance.

What we see:- Underground river, streams carved into granite, an excellent example of a volcanic dyke holding back a lake of water, wildflowers, balancing ricks and a large needle of granite towering into the sky.

Note: Those of us who saw the few slides of the area shown by the leader at the last meeting would recommend this as a thoroughly fascinating granite area to visit.

Editor.