

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

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

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 1982 -- 1983

PRESIDENT	John O'Donnell
VICE-PRESIDENTS	Robin McCosker Frank Wilkinson
SECRETARY	Joan Stevenson
TREASURER	Dot Archer
NEWSLETTER EDITOR	Jean Harslett
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BUSHWALKING OFFICER	Ray Marsden
<u>COMMITTEE</u>	Colin Hockings David Pfrunder Tom Archer Ailsa Wilkinson Lyle Thompson Jean Harslett

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

OUTINGS - Each SUNDAY PRECEDING the FOURTH WEDNESDAY of the Month.
at 8 P.M.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Single - \$5.00

Family - \$8.00

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 NEWSPAPER.

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MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING HELD 27th.OCTOBER 1982.

The President welcomed all present, mainly through illness the numbers present were reduced.

Present.. 11 Apologies 7.

MINUTES. That the minutes be taken as read was moved by Mr.Ian Cowie and seconded by Mrs.Dore Mc.Cosker and Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

INWARD Was received from:-

- 1.Desley Mc.Donagh.. Sub.
- 2.Dorothy Halloran..Sub.
- 3.Ena Mc.Cullough...Sub.
4. N.P.A. re cairns at Girraween National Park.
5. Eight Press Statements.
- 6.Tasmanian Wilderness Society re Franklin River Funds and Federal Intervention(two communications)
- 7.Democratic Party, re Franklin River, and Tasmanian
8. Two communications A.C.F. (Wilderness Rescue the Rainforest.
9. Magazine, Qld Naturalist No.131 October/November
10. Magazine Darling Downs Nats. Vol.5 No.2 September.
11. Magazine Richmond Valley Nats. September/October.

OUTWARD:-

- 1.Mr.John James Thanks for being Guest Speaker.
- 2.National Parks Assoc. re Cairns at Girraween to mark Cunningham's Route.
3. 4QS re Outing and Meeting Notices.
4. Dot Archer condolence re passing of her mother.

MOTION:- Moved by Mr.Lyle Thompson and seconded by Mr.T. Archer that the inward correspondence be received and the outward endorsed.... Carried.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OCTOBER 26th.1982.

September Bank Balance.21.10.82.... \$100.93

Receipts

September 21st. Subscriptions. \$39.00

" " Room Collection.. \$1.10

October 24th. Subscription.. \$5.00

\$45.10
\$146.03.

Payments:-

September 21st 1982. Magazine Postage \$7.50

" " Magazine Duplication \$5.00

" " September Room Rent \$6.00

\$18.50

October 26th.1982.

Bank Balance \$127.53.

Dot Archer Hon.Treasurer.

Mrs.Joan Stevenson moved that the financial statement of \$127.53 be received and the following accounts be

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FINANCIAL STATEMENT Cont.

passed for payment Room Rent Oct. \$6.00 Magazine Duplication Oct. \$5.00, Magazine Postage Oct. \$7.65, Stencils and Correcting Fluid \$17.90, seconded by Jean Harslett...Carried.

OUTING REPORT:-The Campout to Demon Creek was enjoyed by 17 members and half a dozen children, mountain climbing was rewarded by vegetation "finds" and valley views. Bird watching along the creek was good. In all a very interesting area.

NEXT OUTING. The Next Outing will be to the Boonoo Boonoo Falls area, on 21st November. Leader Tom Archer.

NEXT MEETING:-The Guest Speaker will be Jean Harslett who will speak on their recent trip to Canada.

SPECIMENS: John O'Donnell brought some pieces of fur and thinks it was from an European hare.

2. Jean Harslett had a photograph for display of *Olios punctatus*, alias "The Lesser Huntsman Spider, that had attached itself, bitten and drawn blood to the finger of her unfortunate nephew John, but he was fortunate in having no ill effects. Dr. Davies of the Queensland Museum identified the spider and said, "effects of headache, nausea or pain can be experienced, but the spider is listed as not dangerous."

3. Tom Archer brought a satellite photograph of the Demon Fault area. (including the 'camp-out region'). The "fault" was very well defined on the photograph and Tom explained that the fault had a shift of 40 kilometres.

BUSINESS.

The tree planting at Storm King Dam will be undertaken when the trees have made more growth. They are deemed too small for planting successfully at the moment. President John said, after reporting that Mr. Ted Fitzgerald had produced the trees, but they have been handed over to Tom Archer for his tender care, until they are stronger. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.50pm.

PROGRAMME.

We were sorry to hear of the illness of the Wilkinsons, joint Guest Speakers with the Marsdens, but thoroughly enjoyed the programme on the "Isla Gorge" as given by Millie and Ray. The weathered sandstone provides so much of gorge interest and this supported by the aboriginal paintings to make it a very popular area.

Joan Stevenson

Hon. Sec.

FOR THE YEAR OF THE TREE

"Trees are the people of the landscape. Some are upright and stately, others drooping and graceful, some small and sparse of foliage, others distorted ugly and sinister. There are those that belong to the mountain tops, and others of the river valleys, yet each one is part of a whole, each filling its niche in the pattern of nature "

C.P. Mountford from "Tree Portraits "

CAMP=OUT REPORT TO DEMON CREEK by JEAN HARSLETT

Dore Mc.Cosker arranged the October Camp-out, which was jointly led by her and Robin and family to Demon Creek, the property of Tom and Madge Schiffmann. Perfect weather and a charming campsite set the scene for a successful weekend. Eight people proceeded to the area on the Friday night, and enjoyed special tranquility and early morning mists, the latter which the main party missed. However the tranquility was still to be enjoyed with crystal clear water of Demon Creek, soft grassy banks and the welcome shade of the *Casuarinas*, in all, providing an ideal venue. Our hosts, the property owners, had removed cattle from the paddock several weeks prior to our visit, so that cattle droppings would not spoil our campsite, which I feel is above average in thoughtfulness.

We met quite early in Tenterfield, and proceeded along the Billirimba road to the east of the town. The road is steep and mountainous with ever changing geology, including a good sample of "Maryland Granite, easily recognised by the large and decorative pink orthoclase crystals. The changes in timber and the quality of the trees and the splendid examples of tall "Blackboys" (*Xanthorrhoea*) all attracted attention. Descending to the Rocky River and just prior to actually reaching it we branched off and up Demon Creek to the proposed camp site, after seeing many others which could have been quite admirable too. Tom and Madge Schiffmann were very welcoming, and joined us in the evening at the campfire, and next day on the walk and to lunch. They enlivened our evening with interesting tales of pioneer days and of gold rush days. Surely just such names as Demon Creek and Poverty Point conjured up stories in our imagination. They also took us on a torch eel hunt and next day showed us a primitive "tool" for tossing eels out of the stream for "good tucker".

Robin lead us up a steep hillside to the falls on the "Fault" and pretty views of the valley. Plants in the deep part of the valley were of remnant rainforest type, some surprising and including "sandpaper" fig. On the way down *Prostanthera nivea* graced our way, while further up a *prostanthera* (unidentified) was blooming merrily. On the descent several plants of the rare "Greenhood" (*Pterostylis woollsii*) were seen. This chap is always a 'treat' with its sepals contracted into threadlike 'tails' which may reach an incredible 50-100 mm. in length. For what no one could possibly imagine.

Birds and the watching of them dictated much of our waking time and ranged from the gay Rainbow Birds so prevalent to tiny flashes of brilliance of noddiebirds or scarlet honey-eaters to the loud crunching in the *Banksia* trees, accompanied by harsh calls of the Yellow tailed cockatoos.

The ever present Rainbow Birds or Bee-eaters provided constant pleasure with aerial acrobatics as they gaught all their food in the air and in so doing displayed the prominent orange colouring of their under wing, not forgetting all their other brilliance of colouring and quaint 'needle like' tails. Several nests or nests in construction in the banks were noted.

CAMPOUT REPORT TO DEMON CREEK Cont.

The Rainbow Birds are migratory and arrive about the same time or a little earlier (usually September) than their acrobatic friends the Dollar Birds and depart about March. Madge showed us three Rainbow Birds nests in a field and near her home that commenced on a flat area (not a bank) which was a new type of site for me, anyway, to see.

Birds with nests were a feature of this outing and included the already mentioned Rainbow Birds, many nesting sites, Pardalotes two species, most in the road banks descending to the area, and many, two nests near the campsite. Yellow-tailed Thornbill, three nests, one in the mistletoe above Peter and Darlyn's camp, another in mistletoe further down the creek and one in the honeysuckle in Tom and Madge's garden, also a Blue Wrens nest in the garden. A well designed and manufactured White-winged Chough's nest, with sitters looking very comfortably installed, gave us ample opportunity to see their red eyes. Other nests in use included Double-bar Finch, Kite Peewee, several Wagtails, and a kookaburras nest.

Last but not least at their home and garden we saw some remarkable nesting habits. For sheer numbers and tenacity, Beneath a small fibro construction, about two feet off the ground, on nearly each crossbeam, Williewagtails had commenced nests which were in various stages of completion, and the tally was a remarkable 19 nests !! For sheer determination the Welcome Swallows won hands down. In an open fireplace galley, inside the house a persistent Welcome Swallow had nested and has done for some years. The fire place is regularly used so the galley is deeply blackened by smoke as is the mud nest construction, but they persevere and win each year, even tho' the offspring hang their gasping heads over the side of the nest, when the fire gets a bit hot. Perhaps the hazard is no greater than those of bush predators.

In another place Madge had tried to deter the swallows using various methods people had given here. First six large eagle feathers were hung, but they still built, then rolls of newspaper were suggested, hanging from strings. These they apparently felt added decoration to their improved site !! Finally, Madge was advised that strips of heavy white plastic from fertilizer bags would certainly deter them if all else failed. Not so with this determined couple which built a specially designed nest cornucopia in shape to adequately and fully incorporate those 'great' streamers of plastic designed to be off-putting. The end result is unique in shape, a little shaky on its foundations = but swings quite charmingly to rock the babies to sleep. Last but not least, surely the metal corner-piece holding the older type bed together and supporting the wire mattress too, and situated under the bed (they use) is a new record for a swallow nest site. We were also shown two rats nests which had been kept for their neat construction, one neatly lined with rope and the other more modern with plastic pieces. Madge called up a real flock of finches which come at her bidding and a 'Jacky Winter' (Brown Flycatcher) which calls her

CAMPOUT TO DEMON CREEK Cont.

This little chap hovers just a foot or two in front of Madge at about eye level until she tosses it the peice of cheese, which it catches with hardly an extra flick of the wing, a very graceful performance. Tom and Madge are really part of their surroundings and are truely dedicated naturalists, and have proved to their little friends, their care and concern for them, which it appears that they almost return. It recalled one of my childhood joys the book "The Girl on the Limberlost" where they too lived in harmony with nature. Tom and Madge with Dore's help made it a very good weekend.

Jean Harslett.

BIRDS of DEMON CREEK AREA

Member Ian Cowie kept a careful list of the sightings for the weekend, and so did Peter Langdon. Ian reports that 52 species of birds were seen or heard during the weekend. The highlights included a Spotted Quail Thrush seen by Alec and Denise, a bird infrequently seen feeding on the ground usually in rocky terrain. Ian located the Black Faced Monarch Flycatcher, a handsome chap with its rufous breast, slate grey colouring and distinct mask-like facial pattern. It is a lover of deep vegetation in the wetter gullies, and was seen in just that type of habitat near the base of the waterfalls we climbed. Several cuckoos were seen, the Brush; Horsfield Bronze; Koel and the Channel-billed Cuckoo, the latter two were observed feeding on the fruit of the Native Figs. An inquisitive Grey Fantail was watched with pleasure at its nest.

Thank you Ian for these notes.

FLOWERS AND PLANTS OF THE DEMON CREEK AREA by DORE Mc.COSKER

The shade & protection of the river oaks festooned with their own particular mistletoe in bloom (*Amyema cernicea*) were just part of the setting that made Demon Creek a beaut site for a camp. The clean surroundings provided by Tom & Madge who purposely kept stock out of that paddock for some time and the quiet seclusion far from traffic noises - bar jets - The sandy & shallow creek safe for children made us feel our stay was all too short.

We noted with interest the likeness of the mistletoe to its host plant, the foliage is denser and the flowers scarlet. There were two species of thistles - one with a smaller head of flowers - but both had equally sharp spines, and the children soon learned to dodge these and the few nettles.

Severe winter frosts were thought to have killed the lilly-pillies, but happily small new shoots are breaking through the bark. Bees and birds were busy in the flowering eucalypts. *Dendrobium kingianum* & *D. linguiforme* were blooming on the rocks and *Prostanthera nivea* displayed its dainty white blooms, while higher on the hillside there was a broad leafed *Prostanthera* with white flowers. Later we saw a *Diuris* and *Pterostylis woollsii*, which is a rare orchid.

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FLOWERS AND PLANTS OF DEMON CREEK by DORE Mc.Cosker. Cont.

On a visit a few weeks before Galeola was in bloom. There are some remarkable stands of River Oaks regenerating along the creek, forming little woods, which the owners have refrained from clearing and they are providing the necessary environment for establishing creeping ferns (*Pyrrosia rupestris*) tree ferns, maidenhair, bracken and other ferns. Cucumber orchids (*Dendrobium cucumerinum*) were growing on the river oaks and also establishing were numerous baby elkhorns (*Platyserium bifurcatum*).

On the Sunday two members explored higher on the hill and discovered another sheltered gully containing a wide range of flowering plants. Callistemon (red, not Id.) Pink Pimelea, a broad leaved viscous type (*G. ovata*) Thin light green leaves, sticky when young. The Blue Isotoma (*I. axillaris*) and a minute green flowered herb were seen.

We are grateful to Madge and Tom for sharing their lovely spot with us.

Dore Mc.Cosker.

NOVEMBER PROGRAMME

Millie and Ray Marsden gave us a good programme on the Isla Gorge area, sadly for them, as they said, without their co-Guest Speakers Frank and Ailsa Wilkinson because of illness. These four members shared with several others the first trip of the new concept, a "Jaymay" Tour, which was a trip to the Isla Gorge and spoke in glowing terms of the experience and of Jack and May's set up and organization.

Millie was well prepared and gave us the facts of discovery of the area by Leichardt and others and other interesting and pertinent information. It was most disappointing that the attendance that night was poor, mainly because of illness, as a good programme was missed and Ray and Millie's efforts deserved a full house. Ray then projected some excellent slides of a very picturesque area which were well and interestingly described. Thank you both for a good programme, and a speedy return to good health for Frank and Ailsa.

Jean Harslett.

NEXT OUTING.

PLACE:- BOONOO BOONOO FALLS AREA and ETC.

LEADER MR. TOM ARCHER

DATE SUNDAY 21st NOVEMBER 1982

DEPARTURE TIME Tom suggests that you meet him at the turn off in to the Boonoo Boonoo Falls off the Willsons Downfall Tenterfield road at 10am. The time from Stanthorpe to that point would be about an hour depending how you travel. Tom will do a pre-outing trip this weekend, so you can be assured that he will have something of interest and variety planned for you.

This turn off is soon after you cross the Boonoo Boonoo River and close to the old post office.
Note 10am at turn off, Sunday 21st Nov. Leader Tom Archer.