

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

Monthly Newsletter of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club.

No. 16.

May 1971

P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe

Officers and Committee 1970-1971

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Activities

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

Annual Subscription

Single \$1.00

Family \$1.50

ProgrammeField Outings

<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Leader</u>
Mystery Weekend Campout	23rd May	E. Walker
South Bald Rock	20th June	John Harslett
Nundubbermere	25th July	Jean Harslett
Red Rock Gorge	22nd August	to be arranged

Meetings

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Film Evening	26th May	B. Masters
(Beyond the Great Divide)		(Warwick Travel
The Milford Track		Centre)
Australian Animals	23rd June	to be arranged
Selection of Slides	28th July	Annual General
		Meeting

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Reports of Field Outing to the Tenterfield Area.

General

Despite rain in the early part of the day a reasonably good attendance of approximately thirty people set out from the Stanthorpe Park at 9.30a.m. for Tenterfield.

After morning tea we had a drive around the streets viewing the autumn tonings of the trees (pin oaks, elms and claret ash,) which were a mass of various colours.

One mile south east of the town is the local water supply, where we saw numerous black swans, wild ducks etc. On the Northern outskirts of the town we inspected a very old building which some of the locals say was Tenterfield's first P.O. and Store. Across the road is the old Tenterfield Station Homestead (age unknown). The history of Tenterfield Station dates back to about 1842. In those early days the sheep were herded in flocks of about 1,000 and distributed in suitable positions over the 100,00 acres of unfenced station property.

We had lunch in Jubilee Park (opposite showground). This park has some beautiful trees of various kinds.

Next we moved on to Ghost Gully, an unusual sight with its deep eroded banks.

To the west, about 3 miles out we passed Mt. McKenzie (4217 ft). Further on we reached a point where we parked our cars and walked about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the top of Draining Rock, from there is a magnificent view to the west. To the north-east we could see Mt. Norman, Sth. Bald Rock etc.

Back to our cars, we then drove through to Kildare and Sunnyside.

We were fortunate to have fine weather for the latter part of the day.

P. Ingram.

Autumn Colours at Tenterfield.

The timing of the visit by the Nats to Tenterfield was excellent and nature was seen at her most colourful best. An autumnal atmosphere prevailed, a fresh westerly wind was blowing and coloured leaves were being blown around, giving one the satisfied feeling of a job well done by Mother Nature. One could well have been in Canada or in one of the Northern European large parks.

Botanically Tenterfield is a very rich country town, with tremendous character and obviously interesting history. Its earliest settlers loved and knew nature and left posterity a heritage of magnificent trees, Oaks, Elms, Liquidambers, Ashes, Cedars, Cypressess, and others too many to mention.

It seems that two lots of tree plantings were done on a large scale. One, some eighty to ninety years ago and one in the 1930's. Undoubtedly much thought was given to the choice of the tree species, distance of planting etc. The trees are very healthy and vigorous and are being grown with dedicated care.

Tenterfield, also known as the town of the willows, gave us an outstanding exhibition of autumn tones. One striking phenomenon was that most trees showed their individual colours simultaneously.

Autumn Colours at Tenterfield cont'd

Lombardy poplars provided an excellent background for the liquidambers, pin-oaks and claret-ashes growing along streets and roads. The willows along the creek had their heads bowed majestically and serenely.

Tenterfield, with its excellent collection of relatively large, old trees, made one feel somewhat sad, most towns are comparatively bare and too few attempts are made to make people more tree-conscious.

Certainly, Stanthorpe has some excellent poplars and one or two specimen trees comparable with Tenterfield's but is this situation good enough? Surely the Naturalist club could give a lead now, "better late than never". Stanthorpe's climate and soil are no barrier and the selection of trees to suit our district is boundless.

Tenterfield's Fathers had foresight, dedication and a love for nature and their surroundings. These people worked hard to achieve their goal and the results are there today for all to see and admire.

The following trees with autumn colours were seen:-

Liquidambers - *Liquidambar styraciflua*
 Pin Oak - *Quercus palustris*
 Ash - *Fraxinus oxycarpa*
 Silver birch - *Betula pendula youngii*
 English oak - *Quercus robur*
 Cotton wood - *Populus sp.*
 Lombardy poplar - *Populus nigra italica*
 Claret Ash - *Fraxinus raywoodii*
 Willow - *Salix babylonica*
 Golden Ash - *Fraxinus excelsior aurea*.

Well done Phillip and others who made this trip possible

J. Van Klaveran

Bird Observations

While the bird list of the April outing to Tenterfield was not very impressive numerically the birds noted contributed greatly to the enjoyment of the day. In the various environments there were seen the appropriate birds and with more time and a bird-expert's assistance no doubt more birds would have been recorded.

The water birds at the Tenterfield town reservoir appeared to appreciate the intermittent showers much more than we did as they floated with no apparent effort or darted in and out of the reeds.

Welcome Swallows zoomed around the old post office and I wondered how many generations had been raised in the old building. Crested Pigeons, easily identified by their whistling-winged flight, seemed equally at home by the old Tenterfield Station Homestead, and Spur-winged Plovers raised the alarm at our approach just as they no doubt did at the first appearance of the early settlers. Throughout the day Kookaburras obligingly supplied the best-known Australian bush noise.

Black-shouldered Kites and Nankeen Kestrels were worthy of long admiring observation whether they were motionless on

Bird Observation cont'd

power lines scanning the ground, or hovering for long periods over the one spot or plunging earthwards like a rocket to rise quickly with a grass hopper or some other vermin.

Watching two large Wedge-tailed Eagles drifting up and down in the air currents near the Qld. N.S.W. border set me to musing and hoping. In N.S.W. in the eyes of the law at least they are recognized as the majestic vermin destroyers that they are, and worthy of, complete protection. In Qld. however they are still declared pests with a bonus on their heads. Unfortunately far too many people reach for a rifle when they see anything they vaguely describe as a hawk whether it be a Wedge-tailed Eagle with a 10ft wing span or a small completely harmless Kestrel. As we drove on I hoped the soaring eagles would not drift over the demarcation line that could effect their chance of survival.

A 'red flower' on a dead branch proved to be a beautiful Rose Robin and a brilliant flash of red was from the underside of the wings of a group of Scaly-breasted Lorikeets. The repertoire of songs from Pied Butcher Birds and Black-backed Magpies were a melodious contrast to the warning chatter of Noisy Miners and the loud harsh call of Red Wattle Birds.

Yes, birds did contribute greatly to the enjoyment of the day.

Bird List

Wedge-tailed Eagle
White-faced Heron
Pied Currawong
Black-backed Magpie
Sparrows
Starlings
Crow
Pee Wee
Swans
Little Pied Cormorant
Maned Goose
Coot
Noisy Miner

Little Grebe
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet
Welcome Swallow
Crested Pigeon
Spur-winged Plover
Red Wattlebird
Kookaburra
Black-shouldered Kite
Nankeen Kestrel
Eastern Rosella
Rose Robin
Willy Wagtail
Pied Butcherbird

T. Chapman

Report of Monthly Meeting.

The attendance was not as good as usual at this meeting owing to some members being on holidays and others involved in another important meeting.

The secretary read the minutes of the last meeting and reported that newsletters have been received from the following clubs :- Chinchilla, Brisbane and Richmond Valley.

The treasurer's report showed a bank balance of \$7.50. Well done those who subscribed their 30 cents!

General business included a mention of the interesting outing to the Tenterfield area and a resolve by those present

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Report of Monthly Meeting cont'd

to seek the cooperation of the Managing editor of the Border Post regarding the exclusion of future advertisements which offer money for the capture of wild birds.

The Mystery campout weekend was outlined by the leader, as was the programme for the next meeting when Mr. Barry Masters from Warwick will give a talk on "Conservation and the Tourist" and show two films.

Mr. R. McCosker moved the motion that the club should join the Y.H.A. and this was agreed to by vote.

It was suggested that the Ranger from the New England National Park be approached to give a talk to the club at some future date.

It was decided that the leader of future outings should be responsible for providing a first aid kit for field outings.

The highlight of the evening came when Mr. J. Harden, senior lecturer in Microbiology and chairman of the Plant Protection Group of the Queensland Ag. College Lawes gave a fascinating illustrated talk on "Fungi", and showed many specimens and pictures of various species.

Rainforests L.J. Webb by courtesy of author and Wildlife Mag.

What is a Rainforest?

Tropical rainforest popularly called "jungle", "brush" or "scrub" in Australia is the vast, dense, primitive, vegetation which girdles the equatorial regions of the globe and extends in discontinuous patches into the subtropics.

Tropical rain forest is the most complex plant community on earth. It is an ancient reservoir of forms of life which flourished millions of years ago, and it served as the birth place of Homo sapiens. One acre of tropical rain forest supports hundreds of different species of higher plants, besides a multitude of lower forms, and many species of animals.

What do we know about it?

Science knows little about the enormous complexity of life in this oldest, richest, and most neglected environment. Professor Corner of Cambridge recently said: I fear, lest all the virgin lowland forest of the tropics may be destroyed before botany awakes".

Added to our ignorance is the threat of the population explosion in tropical rain forest areas: no longer can "shifting cultivation" and primitive forms of agriculture suffice to feed the expanding millions of peoples who are seeking a new place in the sun. It has been estimated that the problem of finding new scientific forms of land use in the tropic affects over 200 million people occupying 14 million square miles.

Where do rainforest grow in Australia?

In northern Australia it reaches its best development in the Cocktown-Ingham area and elsewhere occurs as scattered pockets of monsoon forest where the rainfall and soils are suitable. Patches of rain forest of tropical type stretch southwards along the moist eastern coast to the Illawarra district south of Sydney.

Rainforests cont'd

How does Rainforest affect us?

Most tourists agree that contact with tropical nature is a great aesthetic experience; it is hard to describe that feeling of wonder, curiosity and perhaps apprehension when we are first confronted by the luxuriance of tropical rain forest with all its vivid forms of life - forest piled on forest, dim seething, decorated with monkey ropes, plank buttresses, orchids, ferns, strangling figs, and a bewildering variety of leaf shapes, bark types lichens and mosses.

The tropical rain forest provided many products of commercial value such as timbers, cabinet-woods and fine chemicals, and its very presence buffers the environment from violent changes in climate, soils and pest outbreaks which are detrimental to the survival of man.

The eastern Australian rain forests provide many species of luxury cabinet-woods and are being investigated for chemicals of possible benefit to medicine. Many hundreds of new chemical compounds have been discovered. Some of these, such as alkaloids (bitter substances such as ~~as~~strychnine or nicotine which have powerful physiological effects on man) have been shown to be of great promise in the treatment of cancer and heart disease. Yet it takes something like twenty years to investigate one species, and research is still in its infancy. Plants such as "scrub ash" (a small rain forest tree with bright yellow inner bark and glossy leaves like citrus) have given new leads in cancer research, yet we do not know the active principle in the stinging tree or "Gympie Gympie" or how finger cherry causes blindness.

How do we regard our Rainforests?

Australians would have completely destroyed these forests but for the efforts of a few far sighted individuals who saved such parks as Bellenden Ker, the Bunya Mountains, Carnarvon and Lamington. Much of the Australian rain forest has been cleared for dairying and agriculture, a necessary phase in early settlement but today many areas have problems of low soil fertility, erosion and weed invasion especially on the eastern slopes. Examples of such areas are Julatten in north Queensland, Eungella Range near Mackay, Kin Kin - Gympie area south Queensland, Eastern Dorrigo, N.S.W.

Why do we need Rainforest Reserves?

We need to preserve representative and adequate areas of the tropical rain forest for many reasons;

to show future generations of Australia how the country appeared to their pioneer forebears - this intrinsic interest is part of our cultural heritage,

to provide tourists from Australia and abroad with beautiful and characteristic landscapes and recreational areas,

to furnish "outdoor laboratories" for research teaching and education.

to shelter many different species of wildlife which are unique

to serve as a "word bank" of living material; this is economically important for breeding new species and in

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Rainforest cont'd

biological control. And ethically man has no right to destroy nature which is irreplaceable and which he does not yet understand.

to preserve plants which chemical research is only just beginning to show contain powerful drugs of benefit to mankind. Have we enough reserves?

No.... Only a small percentage of the various types of rain forest in Australia is preserved in national reserves and parks. Example in the coastal lowlands under 1,000ft altitude between Rockhampton and the N.S.W. border with a population of more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of a million people, only 12,000 acres are included in national parks at present and only a fraction of this is rainforest.

Jewels of Nature

Recently two very dedicated amateur entomologists spent a few days in our district. While here they added to their remarkable collection of Buprestides (Jewel Beetles) and also gave much pleasure to some of our club members who has the opportunity to see and discuss what is one of the most comprehensive collections of these beautiful beetles.

Mr and Mrs. Carnaby of Wilga, Western Australia admit with justifiable pride to being self-taught entomologists. When young they were both interested in beetles of all types and indulged in more than the usual "collecting for curocity". Like most of us the demands of farming and later other occupations meant they had limited time for their hobby. Now, retired however, they have spent the last two years full time collecting and learning, concentrating on Buprestidae. Mr. Carnaby claims that he can identify over 400 of this group of beetles and when you see the close resemblance between species and the wide colour variation within some species you appreciate the amount of time he has spent studying this hobby and learning such names as "Stigmodera yarrelli" etc. This in itself is a remarkable achievement.

Even more remarkable however is the collection of Buprestidae they have in display cases in a special caravan, truly an "entomologists dream". The glass topped cases are mounted on fibre glass cushions and the specimens travel perfectly over the roughest roads. At one stage the potholes of the Nullabor Plains road (officially called the Eyre Highway but more impolitely referred to by most travellers) shattered the windows of the caravan and even broke the glass tip of one case but fortunately the specimens were not damaged.

Since leaving West Aus. with the "Buprestidae Van" and four-wheel drive living quarters they have travelled to Darwin and North Qld. and are now on their way back to W.A. via Armidale, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide. Museums and Universities are their main interest in the cities. Normally they avoid built-up areas preferring the open spaces where their jewelled beauties can be found. At present their only concern with time is to be back in Perth by August so that they can then go to the Kimberleys. Guess why?

Jewels of Nature cont'd

Mr. Carnaby supplied the following information.

There are 20,000 known beetles (Coleoptera -- meaning armour plated) in Aust. and most of these are represented in Western Aust. with many confined to that state.

Buprestidae (Jewel Beetles) make up one large group of beetles and consist of 12 families distributed all over the world. Six of these families are found in Australia and one "Stigmodera" is found only in Aust. "Stigmodera" make up the greatest part of the Carnaby's collection.

There are 900 known species of Buprestidae in Australia most of them are found in W.A. and many hundreds are confined to that State. They are all wood borers, that is the larvae spend their life eating the wood in their special kind of trees, mainly Melaleucas and Mallees, also boring into the roots. Some spend years as larvae and when they emerge as beetles they are fully grown and live only a matter of days, congregating on flowers where they mate. The females lay eggs around the holes of trees at ground level, amongst old leaves and then die.

Being borers some of the beetles have economic significance particularly in the valuable furniture woods in the north. The main interest in them however is because of the remarkable colour and pattern variations; they are well named "Jewel Beetles".

Mr. Carnaby pointed out that our insect fauna is still very poorly known, much of it still needing to be collected and classified. The life history of some of our most interesting species is quite unknown. Of the 258 species of Buprestidae in the collection about 100 are unknown by the W.A. museum and the Australian museum in Sydney, naturally this makes accurate identification very difficult.

In the past 2 years Mr. and Mrs. Carnaby have collected over 40,000 beetles, thousands of which have been sent to Museums and to other collectors.

Their display cases contain over 4,000 specimens of Buprestidae, of 258 species set out with a full line of 15 to 20 beetles of each species showing various colour forms and they do vary markedly.

In addition they have about 35,000 Buprestidae, carefully labelled and wrapped in paper tissue, for exchanging with other collectors, universities, museums etc. The Carnabys are so enthusiastic about their hobby that they readily give away specimens that they spent hours, perhaps weeks collecting and there are many W.A. Buprestidae now bolstering at least two local beetle collections.

As with any collection accurate labelling is essential and each specimen has been meticulously mounted and labelled with identification (where known), date and place where collected and by whom collected. When properly mounted and carefully looked after these beetles should last almost indefinitely, some in the collection are over 40 years old and in perfect condition.

While we felt that the collection was a remarkable achievement, Mr. Carnaby said "This is only a start". Their ambition is to collect Buprestidae for 10 years keeping accurate records of time of year when collected, locality (both place and type of tree etc.), population in area at the time and much other equally interesting and important information. Naturally they hope to find as many as possible of the 900 known species and who knows how many unknown ones.

They anticipate it will take at least 10 years to accumulate accurate information which they hope to publish in book form and they feel there is an urgency about their quest.

Western Australia, well-known for its beautiful native flowers, is also rich in equally beautiful beetles but the Carnabys maintain they are being exterminated even more quickly than the flowers. Whereas once plentiful close to Perth, beetles are now scarce anywhere west of Lake Grace and Southern Cross and

that is no idle statement. Let us hope that these beautiful beetles do not become a thing of the past and in wishing Mr. and Mrs. Carnaby every success in their dedicated task I hope to have the opportunity of seeing their fascinating collection again when I know it will be even bigger and better and nearer to their ambitious goal.

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We are indebted to the Queensland Ornithological Society for the following article.

EASTER CAMPOUT TO GIRRAWOEN NATIONAL PARK, WYBERBA.

Q.O.S.'s second Easter campout was held at Girrawoan National Park at Wyberba and attracted bird watchers from many parts of south-eastern Queensland; some came from as far away as Gin Gin and Chinchilla.

The usual campfire and sing-song was attended by all. Our vice-president, Cec Cameron, gave a talk on the status of the Scrub Turkey and what steps the Q.O.S. should take to have it removed from the fauna list of unprotected species.

Bird life generally was interesting and varied, and the most sought after species appeared to be the Chestnut-tailed Heath-wren. Some spent hours searching for this bird without luck, while others were fortunate enough to see it on a short walk.

The Turquoise Parrot was located near the road about one mile west of the campsite and many members managed to see the bird here.

Probably the most numerous species was the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater which was abundant around the campsite. Several members had not seen this species before.

On the last night a small party camped near Mt. Norman on the southern part of the park. Observations of interest in this area were numerous Red-browed Treecreepers, close views of a Chestnut-tailed Heathwren, and the sighting of a Flame Robin on the slopes of Mt. Norman. This is the most northerly range for that species. Six Glossy Cockatoos feeding on Casuarina seeds were seen while leaving the area.

Bird species seen were: Little Pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron, White-necked Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Wood Duck, Whistling Eagle, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Nankoon Kestrel, Brown Falcon, Painted Quail, Spur-winged Plover, Bar-shouldered Dove, Peaceful Dove, Common Bronze-wing, Rainbow Lorikeet, Little Lorikeet, Yellow-tailed Cockatoo, Glossy Cockatoo, King Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Turquoise Parrot, Brush Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Boobook Owl, Tawny Frogmouth, Kookaburra, Welcome Swallow, Pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Spotted Quail-thrush, Grey-crowned Babbler, Blue Wren, Variogated Wren, White-throated Warbler, Straited Thornbill, Little Thornbill, Brown Thornbill, Buff-tailed Thornbill, Yellow-tailed Thornbill, White-browed Scrub-wren, Brown Woodbill, Speckled Warbler, Chestnut-tailed Heathwren, Eastern Whiteface, Jacky Winter, Scarlet Robin, Flame Robin, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, Yellow Robin, Grey Fantail, Willy Wagtail, Leaden Flycatcher, Restless Flycatcher, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Thrush, Eastern Shrike, Orange-winged Sittella, White-headed Sittella, Brown Treecreeper, White-throated Treecreeper, Red-browed Treecreeper, Mistletoe-bird, Spotted Pardalote, Silvereye, Striped Honeyeater, Scarlet H., Fuscous H., Yellow-faced H., White-eared H., Yellow-tufted H., White-plumed H., White-naped H., New Holland H., Spiny-checked H., Eastern Spinebill, Noisy Miner, Red Wattlebird, Noisy Friarbird, Diamond Firetail, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Finch, Olive-backed Oriole, Peewee, Dusky Woodswallow, Pied Currawong, Grey Butcherbird, Black-backed Magpie, Satin Bowerbird, Raven, Crow, Starling, Sparrow.

FINE FILMS FEATURE AT NEXT GENERAL MEETING - 26/5/71

At the next general meeting we will have the privilege of viewing several films on varying subjects of great interest and wide appeal.

Mr. Barry Masters of the Warwick Travel Centre will give us a short talk on the role of the tourist in conservation, followed by a film of strong local interest. "Beyond the Great Divide". This film was produced by the J. Arthur Rank Organisation for the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau and has just completed an Australia wide theatre circuit.

"Four Ways to Milford" is the supporting feature.

This film describes the four ways a person can travel to the World famous Milford Sound in the South Island of New Zealand.

It is an absorbing film and describes in detail The Milford Track, (the finest walk in the world) which winds for 33 miles through glacial covered gorges surrounded by six to ten thousand foot snow capped mountains.

For all those interested in travel and the natural environment these films should not be missed.

CAN ANYONE TELL ME?

Why are Antarctic beeches so called?

S.O.S. Your editor is in desperate need of answers to questions asked in this Section. If you have any please send them post-haste to The Editor, C/- P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe.

DID YOU KNOW?

A. There are no native parrots in Europe or Northern Africa, only one species (which has probably died out) in North America, none in Asia (with the exception of India) and very few in Southern Africa or India. Even in South America, where the largest parrots, the Macaws, are found all species belong to the one family.

In contrast, there are 57 species of parrots in Australia and 50 of them are found nowhere else in the world.

B. That if a Red Kangaroo, through drought or other hardship of its semi-desert grassland home, loses the 'joey' from its pouch; another is very quickly ready to take its place. This second young one has been kept in a state of suspended growth at the blastocyst stage of development. Normally its growth would not recommence until its older brother or sister was sufficiently developed to leave the pouch; but the premature loss of the pouch young for any reason would begin again the suspended development of the embryo young one.

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It is still "all systems go" for the mystery campout week-end. The site has been inspected and more than lived up to expectations.

We have a good clear site (an ancient bora-ring) for a central campfire surrounded by trees under which we can drive and pitch camp right next to a wide rocky stream.

The campsite is on private property which we have kind permission to use for the week-end.

There are two gates on the private property which must be kept shut but if we all travel in convoy there should be no problem.

"Nats" signs will be placed at strategic points after the main highway is left for those who have to follow later on Saturday afternoon.

Please advise if you wish to join the trip late Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning so that road directions can be given.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WEEK-END.

Because we will be only spending one night out I would suggest that we try to survive the night with as little in the line of "home comforts" as possible.

EQUIPMENT.

Accommodation in tent, tent fly or car. Sleeping bag or couple of blankets (warm clothing will substitute extra bedclothes). Ground Sheet, li-lo or stretcher. Billys, frying pan, cup, plates and cutlery, First Aid Kit, torch, boots or sandshoes, camera, notebook and pencil, binoculars, matches and candle, large supply of humour and common sense, small pack if climbing mountain.

FOOD.

Fresh food and cold drinks can be kept in "Esky". Keep meals simple and easy to prepare to save time.

GENERAL.

Top up petrol tank. Take home all empty tins and bottles etc. as you finish with them. There are no conveniences of any nature so the following rule will apply: - Ladies - upstream; Gents - downstream.

Depart Stanthorpe Park 1.30 p.m. Saturday, 22nd May in convoy.

PLEASE - Take only Photos, Leave only Footprints.

Phone 888 for further information.

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