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June 1971

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

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Monthly Newsletter of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club.

No. 17

June 1971

P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe

Officers and Committee 1970 - 1971

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 Vice President
 Secretary
 Treasurer
 Editor
 Assistant Editor
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Mr. T. Chapman Ph. 232
 J. Harslett and W. Cathcart
 E. Walker Ph. 888
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 B. Dodd, I. Chapman, S. Wilmot,
 Z. Newman, W. McCosker
 R. Tremear
 C. Van Klaveren, K. Ree and M. Muir.

Publicity Officer
 Magazine Sub-Committee

Activities

Meetings

4th Wednesday of each month

Field Outings

C.W.A. Rooms 8 p.m.

Sunday preceeding 4th Wednesday

Annual Subscription

Single \$1.00

Family \$1.50

ProgrammeField Outings

<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Leader</u>
South Bald Rock	20th June	John Harslett
Nundubbermere	25th July	Joan Harslett
Red Rock Gorge	22nd August	to be arranged

Meetings

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Australian Films	23rd June	J. Verri
"Caves" also		
Annual General Meeting	28th July	David Bluhhorn

PLEASE USE YOUR NOMINATION FORM ENCLOSED.

ED.

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTReport on Mystery Campout Week-end: 22/23 - 5 - 71.

About the only mystery of the campout week-end was the route down the mountain on Sunday afternoon.

This was accomplished after obtaining views from vantage points on the lower slopes of the mountain which were not actually intended.

Approx. 45 people were busily pitching camp at 3.30 p.m. Saturday afternoon on the banks of Reynolds Creek under a clear, mild, sunny sky.

The evening proved to be just as mild and it was not uncommon to see shorts and short sleeves around the campfire, till late in the evening. (A far cry from the evening temperature we would have expected on the Granite Belt).

An enjoyable evening around the campfire built on an ancient bora-ring was spent with entertainment provided by the Wilkinsons. Our thanks to this talented family for making this an evening we shall remember for a long time.

Sunday morning dawned clear and mild as a party of 36 intrepid explorers set out to climb Mt. Greville (2522 ft.). We climbed up through a most spectacular gorge containing Piccabeen Palms and much loose underfoot rock which made walking quite tiresome. The gorge opened out near the top of the mountain where we ate lunch and drank in the views offered by this grandstand overlooking the mountains of the main range and the McPherson Range with Moogerah Dam and Reynolds Creek at our foot.

The return down the mountain was made by way of the south west ridge which at that time was an unknown quantity.

The ridge proved too difficult for the average walker so we retraced our steps to the top of the gorge by which we returned to the campsite.

Some members then enjoyed the doubtful pleasure of swimming in the deep crystal clear, cool waters of Reynolds Creek. (Something we would not be doing at the end of May in Stanthorpe).

Camp disbanded slowly, possibly because we were reluctant to leave our idyllic environment, and several members proceeded to Stanthorpe via Teviot Falls and The Head.

The success of this campout can only be judged by the members who will volunteer to pack their sleeping bags and "get out and get under the stars" for the next Nats Campout.
EWW.

Report of General Meeting, 26th May, 1971

There were 45 people present at the meeting held in the C.W.A. rooms on the 26th May, 1971.

The President reported that a deputation from the Club to the Managing Editor of the Border Post regarding insertion of advertisements requesting trapped birds was

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTReport of General Meeting (Cont'd):

well received by him and that no further advertisements of this nature will be accepted by him. The Secretary displayed a cloth "Fauna Sanctuary Sign" suggesting that members of the Club and their conservation-minded friends may wish to nail these to posts and trees at conspicuous points on their properties. Mrs. Z. Newman seconded that thought and suggested that we try to obtain 100 copies for the club's use.

A suggestion from Mr. T. Spiller was voiced in connection with bush fire service. He thought that perhaps the Club would be interested in this service. The President said that individual members would certainly be interested though he doubted if the Club as a whole could take on fire fighting as part of its activities. Discussion will be continued on this point at a future meeting when it is hoped that Mr. Spiller will be present.

The suggestion of a suitable rope to be carried by the Club on bush walking expeditions was made and will be further discussed at the meeting when Mr. D. Blubhorn gives his talk on "Caving".

Mr. E. Ree is to be approached to lead the expedition to Red Rock Gorge later this year.

The leader of the mystery week-end campout showed a few slides of the area visited before the guest speaker, Mr. B. Masters of Warwick gave his talk on "Conservation and the Tourist".

Notes on Talk by Mr. B. Masters:

Last Sunday I visited a glorious spot with my family.

Way off the Highway - across a couple of paddocks - to the banks of a wee stream.

There we found a tent village with a population of around 45.

At the time of our arrival the "village" was almost deserted.

The population, young and old alike, were on the sides of -- or on top of the mountain across the stream.

Now why did these 45 people leave their comfortable homes - make a round trip of some 150 miles and undertake such a hazardous climb?

Why indeed?

Probably for the same basic reason that there were people along the highway in every parking area big enough to pull off the road, spread a rug and eat a lunch either a pre-packed or prepared with the assistance of a small fire on the spot.

There were four cars in a barren heavy vehicle rest area - some 30 or more in the forestry picnic ground opposite the service station before the Gap - and at the Gap parking area was over flowing with vehicles.

Today more than ever before people are on the move.

The tourist comes in all sizes and all ages. From the couple with young children having a day in the bush to the grandparents, retired, caravanning around Australia.

Whether they are on a one day trip out of the city - a week-end camp with the Club - on holiday doing as much of Australia as they can in three weeks (so long as the car holds together) or on an organised tour around the world - They are all looking for

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTNotes on Talk by Mr. B. Masters (Cont'd):

something different from their everyday - some new experience - some enjoyment.

Now lets look at the combination of conservation and the tourist.

Possibly there are a number of you in this room who have a flush of anger and indignation when you hear tourism and conservation mentioned in the same breath - most dedicated conservationists will.

However I believe that they are closely related in their structure and problems and that they need each other if either is to fulfill its purpose.

Firstly conservation:-

Conservation is a word that today is becoming more and more a press and political football - A topic to be used to stir extreme points of view -- A topic to be used one way or the other in political policy as public opinion swings.

We have had in our community for a number of years a variety of conservation-minded groups such as Field Naturalists Clubs, National Parks Associations, Wild Life Preservation Societies, Speleological Clubs, Bushwalking Clubs, Littoral Societies, Bird Watching Clubs Etc.

All most dedicated - All most important -- All doing their bit for the extension and protection of our preserves. This is good and I am fully behind all their aims.

Next we have the Government Department which controls our National Parks and makes the decisions on extensions and new reserves.

This is a small sector of the Department's work which itself operates on a very small budget allocation when compared with other Departments.

Now lets look at the resultant situation. We have a number of groups of keen people who devote their leisure time to the study and promotion of conservation and a smallish Government Department doing the best it can on funds allocated.

On the other hand we have Land Developments, Mining and Heavy Industry etc.

All eagerly looking for more land.

These people are not limited by either funds or time - They are professionals each preparing reports and studies in a detailed way to convince the authorities and the general public that their particular project will be of enormous benefit to the community.

This very same community who, when they have a week-end free, or holidays, wish to go somewhere to be free of the everyday.

Now lets look at the tourist industry.

The tourist industry like conservation is made up of numbers of groups such as local Tourist Associations, District Tourist Bodies, Sub-Committees of Chambers of Commerce etc. 99% of which are people devoting their leisure time to preparing reports, brochures, promotion etc for their particular area - and as with conservation-minded groups operating on limited funds - next we have the businesses deriving all or part of their income from the tourist such as hotels, motels, flats, caravan parks, service stations, souvenir shops, cafe's, coach operators, airlines, taxis, shipping coys etc. even to chemist and hairdressers.

These businesses by a large and small owner operated shows and even in the case of the companies few of any magnitude when compared with mining companies etc.

As the tourist business is spread over such a wide field people cannot appreciate it as an industry - for instance you can take people to Newcastle and show them a complex of buildings, pipes, etc all on the one site and they will be most impressed with the Steelworks - however to show them the tourist industry you would be driving all over the city seeing a motel here, a service station there.

We also have a Government Department which by virtue of the make up of the industry often is at a tangent to local tourist promotion and the industry generally.

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTNotes on Talk by Mr. B. Masters (Continued):

The resultant situation is then hundreds of individuals, groups, small businesses etc. each doing their bit for their own promotion and spending some of their leisure time trying to co-ordinate and develop local areas of tourist developments.

What then is the answer? In both cases more Government assistance and funds. More funds to employ full time professionals to research and promote our attractions and our reserves old and new.

If these two interests, conservation and tourism were to work jointly on conservation and controlled tourist development within the concepts of our reserve ideals much can be achieved.

Admittedly there will be some minor conflicting views but with joint participation all of these could be resolved.

The result of such a union of interests could be:

- (1) Greater interest and investment in private reserves and sanctuaries as is happening in other States.
- (2) The provision of more picnic facilities incorporating small reserves along our highways, easy access to reserves, better sign posting by local authorities, service clubs etc.
- (3) More money being pooled from interested tourist businesses to employ qualified people full time to research, report and promote all aspects of conservation in a professional way.
- (4) Extend the park ranger system - If Government cannot provide sufficient funds then instigate a honorary ranger group from the dedicated conservation groups.
- (5) With a greatly enlarged ranger service, then would follow better control of people within our parks - better education of the public to appreciate the finer details of a park not just the scenic views - the supply of more detailed printed information on our parks for the visitors.

Whether the dedicated conservationist likes it or not he is faced with two frightening prospects if our reserves are not expended.

(a) The erosion of our present park by land developers and heavy industry.

and

(b) Great over crowding of the remnants of these reserves as people obtain more leisure time through 4 day working weeks and four weeks holidays etc.

By catering for the latter with my previous proposals - encouraging the general public to visit and above all get to know and appreciate the unique flora of our reserves, that we are attempting to protect.

You will not necessarily get thousands more dedicated members for the various conservation-minded groups - however you will get thousands more people actively talking conservation, knowing why conservation is important and convincing others of their findings.

This then creates greater public concern for your ideals, which will sway Government thinking to take more positive and lasting action to halt the main problem - the erosion of our reserves by non conservation enterprises.

Thus the pressure of tourism on parks and reserves can, if handled correctly be turned to pressure for conservation.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

1. Close-Up of a Forest Community.

A day in the life of creatures who live on or under bark of trees within 9 miles of Brisbane. By kind permission of Stan Breedon of Walkabout Magazine.

As the early sun rises to warm the eastern sides of the tree trunks, the hunters and hunted emerge from their protection of loose tree-bark and holes. The black and white striped snake-eyed skink (*Ablepharus boutonii*) being the most curious and least cautious, is the first to appear, stretching itself out to absorb the sunshine. The colourful, active jumping spiders are quick to follow, their huge eyes searching for prey.

Astia hariola, one of these spiders, strikingly coloured in black, white and yellow, spots a fly alighting behind her. In a flash, she reverses position to confront the fly with a fluttering pair of hairy palps (appendages next to the jaw) and a battery of eight eyes, the big middle pair constantly flickering. These fluttering and flickering movements mesmerize the fly into immobility. Slowly the spider closes in. Her smaller front eyes accurately assess distance; the bigger ones give her a clear, enlarged image of the victim. When she is close enough to jump, she fastens herself with a silken lifeline to the tree, raises her strong front legs and pushes off with her hind legs. A brief struggle, and *Astia hariola* has breakfast.

A much larger jumping spider (*Opisthoncus mordax*) is lining a curled piece of bark with silk before laying her very many eggs. When this is completed she will stand guard, occasionally capturing prey that blunders by, until the eggs are hatched and the young spiders disperse to fend for themselves.

The jumping spiders are perhaps the most interesting indigenous arachnids. Books have been written about the colourful courtship dances of the male. The fact that Britain has only 32 species of these inquisitive and friendly spiders against Australia's 209 known species, indicates that they are mainly tropical.

When the rising sun has warmed the snake-eyed skink into activity, it, too, takes up the hunt for food. It does not employ the careful stalk of the jumping spiders, but rather a sudden, overpowering rush. In this way it catches mosquitoes, flies, hoppers, small cicadas, crickets and even spiders. But now the skink has its eye on a tree hopper (*Platybrachys oculata*) whose large eyes detect its approach. Just before the lizard is within striking distance, the hopper leaps away from the tree with a movement so sudden that disappearance seems instantaneous.

These hoppers, beautifully marked relations of the cicada, suffer extensively at the hands of the carnivores. Even their eggs, laid on smooth bark, are attacked by the ants which cut them down as soon as the neat rows are deposited. These attacks are probably due to their lack of protective colouring, repulsing odour or hard exterior shell. Yet, despite it all, these insects abound.

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Close-up of a Forest Community (contd.)

Many spiders and insects rely entirely on their protective colouring to escape detection. Among these are *Boarmia canescaria*, a moth, and a small relative of the garden spider - engineer of large and complicated webs. The latter, a minute *Epeira* species, builds a web equally complicated though smaller in size, and situated over small depressions in bark. A chance discovery of this small, grey spider is almost impossible, especially as it will vigorously vibrate its web at the slightest sign of danger, becoming a smudge against a grey surface. Unlike the jumping spiders, it is highly inactive. It will sit motionless in the centre of its web, roused occasionally by flies and mosquitoes that have become entangled.

In the hiding places provided by bigger trees, we find another, larger skink, the striated skink (*Egernia striolata*), whose striking, aloof appearance and muscular body are a true indication of a ruthless hunter. There is no escape from its vice-like jaws. The delightful, little snake-eyed skink is often its victim, although fortunately it is mostly caught by the tail which parts from the body, giving it a safe - if undignified- getaway. (to be contd.)

2. Extract from a letter to the Club by W. Cathcart
(now living in Townsville)

"I would like to record a big "NO" vote to E. Walker's mystery camp-out. You will remember that on the 22nd May last year we had falls of snow in Stanthorpe and there is a very good chance of cold weather in South East Queensland.

Instead, I would propose a much better "Mystery Camp-out", the weather, I can assure you, will be near perfect, no warm clothing required.

My camp-out is an island set in sparkling coral seas. The island is a National Park with many bush-walks and hundreds of orchids on almost every tree, bush-walks to uninhabited bays, rocky climbs, unspoiled haven for natural wild-life, koalas, wallabies, sea bathing, fishing -big game, sparkling, live coral reefs.

For the bird watchers, there are many "scant-clad" birds to be found on the beaches.

Well, I had better go and polish up my camera lens because the coming long week-end (May) we are going to spend three days on an island.

Best regards,
Wal Cathcart.

(and good luck to you, Wal. and half you luck)

Some Reflections on a visit to Green Mountain - Lamington Plateau.

We had heard and read about this place called Green Mountains - the naturalist's Paradise - where Nature had lavished every beauty and luxury of vegetation, where we could see and hear birds, whip-birds, scrub turkeys, bower birds, where ancient Antarctic beeches grew, where orchids, mosses, lichens, ferns and fungi abounded and also we'd heard that a guest house had been placed in this exotic paradise in which we'd find good food and friendliness at its best. Such a build-up could have led to disappointment, but the experience of spending a holiday there far surpassed our most optimistic expectations. We felt awed and exhilarated as we noticed beauty portrayed in so many ways from that seen in the wide vistas from hill-tops to the gorgeous colourings of miriads of birds which can be observed in the area.

Crimson rosellas not only fed from our hands around the house but flew into the bedroom to get crumbs. The Regent and Satin Bower-birds were daily visitors and we photographed the bower of the latter with all its blue decorations. Among the many other birds seen (over 100 species have been recorded in the park) I was personally very thrilled to see at close quarters several of the elusive whip-birds both male and female and to learn that the male makes the first part of the call and the female finishes it off. We also saw numerous butterflies, the red shouldered pademelon, a ring-tail possum and a short-nosed bandicoot.

One morning soon after breakfast we set out on a hike which took us through the rain forest, past many spectacular waterfalls, across several creeks and up and down numerous rocky slopes. We finally arrived at a place called Wanungra and were reminded of the description of it (and Bethongabel a little further on) in Bernard O'Reilly's book where he writes, "These are airy, orchid fringed balconies on the rim of 2000ft. cliffs which dropped into the valley of the Tweed River." We certainly had a good view of the whole north-eastern corner of N.S.W. with sugar cane fields and even the sea in the distance. Bernard says that the path from Wanungra to Bethongabel transverses the most beautiful forest he has ever seen. Truly one has to walk it to believe the atmosphere there. The gigantic Antarctic beeches, some over 3000 years old, are described as "patriarchs of the forest" in the book "Green Mountains." Centuries of erosions have exposed their gnarled root systems and with decay have opened up mysterious grottoes making it possible for people to walk under the tree proper, through hanging masses of delicate fern and dewy glow-worm threads. Giant bracket fungus, long trailing mosses and grey "beard" lichen festoon the trees and this, coupled with the ever-present misty nature of the weather there makes the experience of that part of the walk stay in one's mind as something mythical rather than real.

We also saw the strangler fig and the giant water vines twisting and twining themselves round and round the jungle trees.

Green Mountain (contd.)

The parasitical fig starts at the top of a tree from seed dropped by birds and throws down a lattice work of cordlike roots. These roots increase in size and finally strangle and kill the parent tree. The fig then assuming command grows rapidly and when the victim rots away towers upwards with an open lattice trunk. Many trees in that area have distinct buttresses including the black jacks, yellow carabeen marara and brown tulip oak.

Some of the Aboriginal place names have interesting meanings e.g. Yanbacoohie Falls means sit down and rest - Kinga Kinga creek- many bends, Elabana falls- beautiful, Boolaboola cascades- four, and Yerumba - sugar ant.

Ornithologists may be interested in the following bird list and times when calls were heard by R. Wheeler and a group of bird watchers who recently visited O'Reillys:-

	a.m.		
Fantailed cuckoo	3.40	Brown Warbler	5.04
Yellow Robin	3.53	Grey thrush	5.05
Blue Wren	3.58	White throated treecreeper	5.06
Boobook Owl	4.13	Rose robin	5.06
Lewin Honeyeater	4.23	Wonga Pigeon	5.09
Noisy Kitta	4.25	Brown Pigeon	5.09
Coach whip	4.35	Golden Whistler	5.10
Grey Fantail	4.36	Southern logrunner	5.10
Spurwined Plover	4.43	Eastern Spinbill	5.20
Pied Currawong	4.50	White brown scrub wren	5.21
Welcome swallow	4.53	Olive Whistler	5.22
Crow	4.57	Yellow throated scrub	5.30
Kookaburra	4.59	wren	
Crimson rosella	4.59	Satin bower bird	5.51
Green catbird	5.00		
Golden Bronze	5.00		
Cuckoo			
Black Backed Mag-	5.01		
pie			
Brown Thornbill	5.02		

ANSWERS TO CAN ANYONE TELL ME?

Refer to April magazine for question on "spitfire caterpillar". The groups of caterpillars referred to are the larvae of the SAW FLIES. In the caterpillars stage they are sometimes referred to as "SPITFIRES" because of their mock attack and exuding of matter which is both distasteful to, and as a defence from bird attack.

The adult sawflies (family TENTHREDINIDAE) are mostly rather large steel blue wasps some with red markings and most interesting because the sting has become modified into a remarkable oviposition or egg-laying organ. It is in the form of a delicate saw (hence the vernacular name). (contd.)

The serrations on the edge of the saw cut slits into the leaves where the eggs are deposited by the female, and, when not in use, it can be folded into a sheath, not unlike a penknife. Surely a wonderful modification of nature - where a sting, which was not required, has been evolved to meet the very specialized needs of this insect.

Thanks to Jean Harslett for this very interesting information.
Ed.

HY ARE ANTARCTIC BEECHES SO CALLED?

Nothofagus cunninghami, the Antarctic Beech, is confined to the colder parts of the Southern Hemisphere, and is one of the most abundant species of the Antarctic fossil flora.

Being the exclusive representative of the Family, Fagaceae in the Southern Hemisphere, and very closely related to the exclusively Northern Hemisphere genus Fagus, or beech, it is rightly called a beech. It is thus the beech of the once extensive Antarctic flora which to-day survives as remnant stands in Southern Australia, New Zealand, and South America.

Its presence in such widely separated areas, together with its long history is one of the arguments used in the theory of Continental Drift, which postulated that South America, Africa, Madagascar, India, East Antarctica and Australia were once joined in the one land mass, called Gondwanaland. This theory is now widely accepted, and the story of Nothofagus is just one chapter in this fascinating postulation.

Thanks to Maurice Passmore for this information. Ed.

DO YOU KNOW?

That a small dark brown bird called the artishornis lives most of its secluded life under the piles of fallen timber and lines its nest with a wood pulp cardboard of its own manufacture?

CAN ANYONE TELL ME?

Could we have something about the life cycle of the Processional Caterpillar now appearing in such numbers in the bush and stripping leaves from so many of the Wattle trees, please. What moth or butterfly is responsible? Is it a night feeder? I have never seen one actually eating a leaf.

How to prevent damage to trees? J.W.

I don't know anything about blue worms, but I know a man who claims to have seen a bright blue snake. He says he wasn't game to tell anyone for a long time because of the inevitable conclusion to be drawn. Perhaps readers may know something more about it.

J.W.

FIELD OUTING

SOUTH BALD ROCK

Sunday, 20th June, 1971.

ASSEMBLY POINT

Stanthorpe Park.

TIME

9 a.m.

LEADER

Mr. John Harslett (details
next page)

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST. June 1971.

We shall be travelling via Wallangarra and Mt. Norman to South Bald Rock. This natural park is unique in Queensland being the only extensive area of granite boulders in Queensland.

South Bald Rock is one of the outstanding land marks of granite situated along the Queensland - New South Wales border. The highest point is over 4000 feet. There is a line of splendid balancing rocks as well as scattered ones in the area. Another important feature is the under-ground fissures which are quite dramatic in places. Some of the tunnels are narrow and dark, so not everyone's 'cup of tea.'

A semi-alpine swamp and the open surfaces of the rock will provide plenty of interest for everybody. We shall be driving through private property by courtesy of the McMeniman Brothers. The track is somewhat rough in places but providing there is no rain immediately prior to our outing, we should be able to drive right up to the proposed picnic spot.

STOUT WALKING SHOES AND RELIABLE TORCHES ARE ESSENTIAL.

P.S.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT.

At our last meeting it was suggested by a member that we should help prevent bush-fires.

While there is no suggestion of involving members in actual physical bush-fire prevention or control (many are already active in this) I do agree that we as a club should, by our actions, set an example in all phases of conservation and without doubt bush-fires are one of the most destructive hazards associated with man.

Not only must we be extremely careful with camp fires when camping overnight or boiling the billy on outings, we should also try to make people conscious of the danger of bush-fire.

Certainly we should give the subject some serious thought and consider any practical suggestions for protecting our native fauna and flora and natural environment from the ravages of fire.
