



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 1985 - 1986

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HON. AUDITOR	

MEETINGS 4th WEDNESDAY of each month at the C.W.A. ROOMS at 8 p.m.

OUTINGS The SUNDAY PRECEDING the 4th Wednesday of the Month.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Singls - \$6.00

Family - \$ 10.00

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.

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING HELD January 22nd, 1986.

Present 18

Apologies 5

President Jean welcomed all present to our first meeting for 1986 and in particular our guests Vera Mather; Irma Kuehnemann and Barry Doro. She also extended greetings to all from Desley McDonagh who now lives in Melbourne.

MINUTES - Moved by Bob Lacey and seconded by May Prentice that the minutes be taken as read in the January Magazine. Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

Inward - received letters etc. from 1. John O'Donnell, 2. Account for \$32.00 from International Color Production 3. Advertising Pamphlet from Glencoe 4. Dept. Ed. approval of our Film borrowing renewal & 12 acquisition lists. Newsletters & Journals - 1. Richmond Valley Nats. Club Jan/86 2. Down Under Vol 24 No.3; 3. Toowoomba Field Nats Club Vol 18 No.2 4. Darling Downs Naturalist No.378; 5. Q'ld Naturalist Vol.26 No.1-4 6. National Parks Assoc. News Vol. 55 No.8 and their 10th Annual Report 7. Rainforest Rescue Dec.13/85 8. Chinchilla Nats. Vol.20 No.1 Govt. Releases - Govt. in Focus Vol.2 No.12 2. 14 Press Releases from Peter McKechnie M.L.A..

Outward - Letter to 4 QS re January Outing and Meeting Notices.

Moved by Esme Lacey and Seconded by Ailsa Wilkinson that the Inward be received and the Outward endorsed. Carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Statement as of 22.01.86.

Balance as at 27.11.85 Cr.221.93

Receipts

Subscriptions 37.00

RoomRentCollec. 8.50

45.50

\$267.43 Cr.

Expenses

Rover Scouts - Mag. Printing 7.00

QCWA - Room Rent 6.00

Mag. Postage 13.00

26.00

Cr. Balance

\$ 241.43

Moved by Treasurer Joan and seconded by Ray Rolland that the Treasurer's report be received and the following accounts passed for payment

ICP - wrappers \$32.00; Room Rent \$6.00; Mag. Postage \$9.50

CARRIED

OUTING REPORT - Jean Harslett spoke on the January Outing to their property. The surprise program consisted of an exercise of 'Look, See and Enjoy' the many insects that could be seen in the garden area surrounding parts. A very pleasant and enjoyable exercise and it achieved Jean's desire for us to 'Look, See and Enjoy' nature around us. Several expressed their appreciation to Jean for the program. After Lunch a trip up the hill 'Rats Castle' proved very invigorating and enjoyable. Thanks again Jean for another interesting day.

Next Outing - Feb. 23rd will be to South Bald Rock. As the access gate is locked this may have to be approached from another direction. Errol Walker is to be asked to lead. More Information in our February Magazine.

MINUTES CONTINUED

Next Meeting - February 26th - after meeting program will be by Rob Harslett on his recent trip overseas by train East to West across Russia.

SPECIMENS - Jean had the interesting case of Insects and chart saying what each one was that she had prepared for us on the Sunday Outing. Many members had another good look at this.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The printing of the Magazine was discussed. Rover Scouts Machine has broken down that did the duplicating and Ian Jackson, who for many years has been responsible for running our Magazine off will be unable to continue. Dot Archer to look into other facilities for printing future magazines.

Moved by Millie Marsden and seconded by Joan Stevenson that a letter of appreciation be sent to Ian expressing our appreciation for the time he has spent printing our Magazine. Carried.

As there was no further business, the meeting closed at 8.37 p.m. and members and visitors enjoyed a program to Mt. Moffat National Park via slides taken by the Marsden, Lacey and Wilkinson families. Many thanks to them all for an enjoyable program.

Dot Archer, Hon. Secretary.

NOTES ON BRITIAN

Many thanks to John O'Donnell who has supplied this article. (Members are pleased to know that John is back home again and wish him a speedy recovery to full health.)

We actually visited Britian to listen to a Philosopher named Krishnamurti, but while there, enjoyed the residue of traditionally lovely scenery.

There was an old grove in Hampshire and another Westonbirt, in Gloucestershire. Each was started last century and Westonbirt now covers hundreds of acres. Both had local and exotict trees interspersed with shrubs such as azalea and rhododendra and mown grass areas.

For those interested, many of the trees had little signs with the name of the tree and the country of origin. Yews, larches, oakes and beech were there and many others such as the magnificent Californian redwoods, the latter known locally as "The Silent Ones." Continued on Page 3.

Our visit to the Harslett's Farm gave rise to this little bit of trivia supplied by Ailsa Wilkinson.

OUR LIFE IS LIKE A VEGETABLE GARDEN

We can be as green as a cabbage,
alike as two peas in a pod
be full of beans,
know our onions,

Go as red as a bbetroot, Have cauliflower ears, Be as stodgy as a turnip
Be as cold as potato, Cool as a cucumber or as hot as a chilli.

Notes on Britian (cont'd)

Price Charles is one of the largest landowners in Britian (over 100,000 acres) and has expressed considerable concern over the various types of land defradation, such as the continued drainage of the wetlands, destruction or heavy pruning of hedgerows (to grow more wheat to add to overproduction), Burning of crop stubble adds to air pollution of course, but the clouds of smoke are affectionately known by the locals as "fret" (sea mist).

We stayed at a guesthouse called "The Elms" but all that remained of htese trees was one dead truck which supported the guesthouse sign. The other few dozen elms, which had been in the vicinity, had died, were cut up and have left no trace.

Prince Charles is taking the attitude that the best way to help others to see more suitable farming techniques atc, is by demonstration on one's own land.

Thanks for the article John and welcome home. Hope you are going from strength to strangth. Ed.

Many thanks to Ray Rolland who has provided the following quiz.

NATS QUIZ

1. Name Australia's largest family of birds. (approx 70 species).
2. Actinotus helianthi has large soft white "flowers" that are, in fact, a series of petal like bracts surrounding many tiny yellowish flowers in the sentre. What is its common name?
3. To which family does the Balck Wattle belong?
Casuarina, Callicoma or Acacia?
4. Most cuckoo's calls descend the scale; which well known cuckoo, common locally, has a call with notes rising up the scale?
5. Girraween National Park covers approximately (a) 11,000 ha, (b) 40,000 h a, (c) 114,000 h a ?
6. Where would you look for a pardalot's nest?
7. Grevillea robusta bears masses of spectacular orange flowers in spring. It grows to a height of (a) 30 cm, (b) 3 m. , (c) 30 m?
8. This bird loves the Granite Belt orchards. It has a leathery head, a horned bill and makes a "chock-chock" sound. What is it?
9. Which description best fits a bird described as being "rufous".
(a) it is brown in colour), (b) likes to perch on top of houses, (c) rough and aggressive towards others.
10. The heath leaved banksia with narrow leaves and orange-red flower spikes is Banksia ?

Answers next issue

REPORT OF THE JANUARY OUTING

19th January, 1986.

By Jean Harslett.

The outing for January 19th was held at Amiens, with a good attendance despite rather hot weather. The outing took the form of a day with the emphasis on insects. I had, for some time, wished to stage such an outing, to make us all aware of the major part insects play. The number and variety found in a very limited area certainly proved this, and I was more than delighted in just what and how many insects were found.

After presenting a few unusual and rather remarkable feats of insects, hopefully to stimulate interest, and a display prepared to show that insects are everywhere and not always easy to find.

This display included moths like leaves or wasps, leaf and stick insects playing hide and seek, beetles in the guise of wasps and ants, for very good reasons. Bees looking just like flies, but of course, the boot is on the other foot, the flies wish to look like bees, for the benefit of a "sus pected" sting, which does not exist. Twelve brown beetles of eight different species and genera, there is a special study of "Baesian Mimicry" for these. Some of these species are distasteful, so it is a worthwhile game. Day flying moths find it useful to look like wasps....stings and things!!!

Members were invited to accept the challenge to see what they could find within the confines of the garde, books were available to confirm their finds if they wished. Remarkably 23 species of butterflies were seen in the garden by various people, the list included the large Orchard Butterfly, Wanderer, Painted Lady, Meadow Argus, Yellow Grass, Common Albatross, White Migrant, Cabbage White, Common Crow (near the Oleander upon which it breeds) Australian Glasswing, Common Eggfly, Ringed Xenica, and Klug's Xenica, Dingy Ringlet, Rock Ringlet, Tailed Emperor breeding on the Acacia as was the Imperial Blue, the Zebra Blue seen mating and egg laying on the Plumbago, many Grass Blues and some tiny Grass Skippers.

When we watched the rapid darting flight of the Australian Admiral, and I remarked that it feeds, in its earlier stages on the stinging nettle, Dot cleverly remarked, "You can easily see it sat on a stinging nettle!"

We noted where the recently arrived immigrants from Africa, the Dung beetles were doing a great job in the cow's droppings. They are doing a great cleansing job and help reduce the fly population, by removing the present breeding grounds not here B.C. (Before cows.)

In a few nearby trees an incredible variety of insects were found. Jasids in three shades on three different coloured gum trees, two species of Robber Flies, several Hover Flies species, one group providing quite a sound effect, Parasitic flies and wasps. Under bark, and cleverly designed "flattened" beetles and spiders, for the convenience of living in flat places. Weevils, Christmas Beetles, various species of the Lady Bird and kindred families were seen as well as plant bugs, many species of ants were seen including bulldogs as May can vouch for three stings. There were others too, including a moth in white pyjamas.

I felt it was a great exercise and thank everyone for entering into the spirit of it.

Editor's note. Our thanks are extended to Jean for the time she had put into preparing the displays and to Jean and Her husband Rob, for their hospitality.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN THE "PINASTER" GARDEN

Every spring, for the last few years, we have had a great variety of birds nesting around our garden.

Our very special visitors are a pair of scarlet robins, resident now for about four years. The robins are a delight to see in and around the garden all year round, and love nothing better than to see you gardening, where they fly right to your feet, feeding on small insects and grubs.

Their cleverly disguised nest, cup shaped, is composed of strips of bark and dried grass bound together with cobwebs. Some years we have observed the female robin lining her nest with vacuum cleaner fluff, discarded in the garden. This year, their first nest was built very close to the house, about 2½m above the ground level. Being built at such an excellent vantage point for photography, a lot of time was spent by all the family in observing and photographing the robin's progress, until four babies were successfully reared.

It was interesting to observe that only the female constructed the nest, and was responsible for the egg incubation, while the male robin's role was to ensure a reliable food supply of small insects. Are the brilliant red, white and black colours of the male too easily seen by would be predators?

The yellow faced honeyeaters are very common around the garden and always seem to nest in the trees and shrubs outside our laundry door. We always know when they are nesting because the honeyeaters show a lot of aggression towards other honeyeaters in their territory. This year the yellow faced honeyeaters successfully hatched and reared three broods, two or three babies on each occasion, unlike the robins, both adults construct the nest cupshaped and made from moss and fibre. The nest is made in a couple of days, working mainly in the morning hours, and the birds also share the incubation of the eggs.

Newcomers to the "Pinaster" garden this year, are a pair of leaden flycatchers. These tail-shivering flycatchers built their first nest ~~about~~ 5m above ground level, in our front garden. Their second nest for the season was built in a tree in the courtyard and was clearly visible from the kitchen window. It certainly made washing-up a more interesting task. The cup shaped nest, decorated with bark on the outside, was built on a dead branch under a larger green branch, well disguised among strips of hanging bark.

Both the adult flycatchers shared the incubation of the eggs, and after three weeks, we were thrilled to see three small heads appearing over the edge of the nest. Both parents worked at a feverish pace feeding their chicks who seemed to have insatiable appetites. The adults always called before arriving at the nest and were met with a loud squeaking from the hungry youngsters. We were amused when a curious thornbill, getting closer to the nest while foraging for food, was met with such a reception. Food consisted of small insects and an occasional dragonfly, the abdomens of which were often seen protruding from a chick's mouth for some time after feeding.

The continual feeding resulted in rapid growth of the baby flycatchers, and within a week, were outgrowing their tiny nest. The nest was kept clean throughout the chick's development, and on one occasion, I watched the female fly in and catch a dropping on the wing. As the chicks grew, more and more time was spent stretching, preening,

"Pinaster" Gardens (continued.)

and vigorously exercising their wings. Now they didn't push one another out I don't know!

Finally, one took the plunge, and left the nest, quickly followed by a brother/sister. I was amazed how well the chicks could fly, and covering distances of 10-15m from leaving the nest. Mum and Dad flycatchers were really kept on their toes locating their adventurous children.

An interesting observation was the adults, when feeding, showed preference to the chicks out of the nest, even though only a few centimetres from the chick remaining in the nest. Maybe bribery is rife in the bird world too, as a means of encouraging the last reluctant chick to hurry up and get mobile!

The young flycatchers can still be seen and heard calling around the garden, and we hope they decide to stay at "Pinaster" together with our many feathered friends.

Below is the bird list of birds seen in the garden, (N) identifies those that nest in the garden.

Black-faced cuckoo shrike (N)	Rufus whistler (N)
White winged chough	Golden whistler
superb blue wren(N)	Grey shrike thrush(N)
white throated warbler (N)	white throated tree creeper (N)
thornbills (N)	sittella
scarlet robin (N)	spotted pardalote
red capped robin (one day only)	silvereye
yellow robin	spinebill (N)
grey fantail (N)	yellowfaced honeyeaters (n)
rufous fantail	white eared honey eater (N)
leaden flycatcher (N)	noisy friar bird (N)
wattle bird	red browed finch (N)
diamond firetail	double bar finch
magpie (N)	sacred kingfisher (N)
currawong	kookaburra
drongo	crow
Willy wagtail	tawny frogmouth (N)
crimson rosella	king parrot
pallid cuckoo	sparrow hawk (N)
dollar bird (N)	

A family of wood ducks raised a family of seven on our dam this year too.

Many thanks for this article, Janet many will envy your "bird" families.

PLEASE NOTE. The next outing will leave from Weeroona Park at 9am on Sunday 23rd and will be to Goomburra with Tom Archer as leader. Our proposed programme drawn up after the annual meeting states that February's outing will be Goomburra, we don't really know how the venue was stated at the meeting as South Bald Rock. However we will hopefully see South Bald Rock in March with the leader Robyn McCosker. Tom would like to leave the park sharp at 9am so please try to be there a few minutes beforehand.

Lunch will be at the cars.

If it suits you better, plan to be at Goomburra State Forest at 10.30am.