

1.

July, 1971.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.

Monthly Newsletter of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club.

No. 18

July 1971

P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe.

Officers and Committee 1970 - 1971.

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	M. Muir.	

Activities

Meetings	4th Wednesday of each month
	C.W.A. Rooms 8.00p.m.
Field Outings	Sunday preceeding 4th Wednesday

Annual Subscription.

Single	\$1.00	Family	\$1.50
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Programme.

Field Outings.

<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Leader</u>
Nundubbermere	25th July	Jean Harslett
Red Rock Gorge	22nd August	Eric Ree

Meetings

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
"Caves" also		
Annual General Meeting	28th July	David Bluhbhorn.

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Report on outing to South Bald Rock:

Sunday 20th June was one of those unforgettable Granite Belt days, with bright sun, a clear sky and cool, fresh air - ideal weather for bushwalking and climbing, as all who attended the South Bald Rock expedition would readily agree.

A large party set off from Stanthorpe, and it was good to see some new faces this time. The journey was reasonably uneventful, via Wallangarra and Mount Norman. Just past Mount Norman, we were amazed to come across an enormous coach, which had brought a party of young campers from Brisbane. It was pleasing to notice, on our return journey, that these young campers had left without leaving any sign of having spent a night there.

At one stage we had to pass through a very boggy area, and this illustrated some interesting driving techniques! Some roared through as though in a tank, others took it more circumspectly, but all got through safely.

We were able to bring our cars right to the foot of the Rock. Before lunch, the party spent a pleasant hour inspecting some nearby balancing rocks. The views were excellent in the clear air - the Pyramids and West Bald Rock could be seen, and a glorious splash of colour was provided by Acacia adunca.

After a good lunch, washed down by billy tea and Stanthorpe apple juice, we set off on our main objective - the summit of South Bald Rock and the cave system. The rock was steep in places, but after some initial hesitation, most of us were leaping around like mountain goats! The views from various vantage points were superb - it was good to be alive! Mount Lindsay and the McPherson Range stood out boldly.

Then we reached a mass of gigantic granite slabs and monoliths. Under this confusion of rocks is an incredible system of caves and passage ways. Deftly our guide, Bill Gooble, led the main party through the easiest route. But many of us found this quite difficult in places! However, the whole system is so extensive that several days could be spent there very profitably.

Because of the great popularity of this outing, and because many of our members were not able to attend for various reasons, another outing to South Bald Rock has been arranged for Sunday 18th July. Meeting at Park 9.30 a.m.

John Harslett.

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Report of General Meeting 23-6-71.

Thirty-five members were present at the meeting when Jean Herslett, vice-president, took the chair in the absence of the President. Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. The secretary reported that Mrs. Donaldson has resigned as a member owing to her move to Brisbane. A newsletter was received from the Q'ld. Naturalist Club. Fauna Sanctuary signs and copies of 'Walkers Guide' were available at the meeting. The clubs' application for membership of the Y.H.A. was acknowledged. The chairman reported on the outing to South Beld Rock and details of the next outing to Nundubbermer were outlined.

Mr. J. Verri said that Mr. M. Fletcher had noticed repeated trapping of birds on the Granite Belt and suggested that we should write to the D.P.I. regarding the availability of licences for potential trappers.* (See note appended. Ed.)

The secretary moved that a photograph of rock formation should be sent to Mr. M. Meniman, the owner of the property on which the last outing was conducted, as an appreciation of permission to use his private road.

It was reported that several members of the recent A.N.Z. A.A.S. conference visited the Stanthorpe area and spent a couple of days here enjoying our environment.

Following the business part of the meeting, Mr. J. Verri talked to the club about his recent trip to the centre of Australia and showed a film depicting some of the places visited.

*Extrat from Wambaliman February 1971 (The Maryborough Club's Newsletter.)

Question. How many hunters licences/open season fauna permits were issued for 1969/70 (a) for personal use
(B) for taking fauna for sale?

Answer. Taking for sale 1786
Personal use 30
TOTAL 1816

Comment All persons involved in "taking" fauna are required to have a hunters licence (\$2.00 for personal use and \$5.00 each for sale).

Question. How many fauna dealers licences were issued in 1969-70?

Answer. 24.

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Report of General Meeting (contd.)

Comment. All person engaged in fauna or in skin dealing are required to take out a licence. Such licences cost a minimum of \$10.00. each.

Question. How many aviaries containing 20 or more birds were registered in Queensland in 1969/70?

Answer. 61.

Comment. The act requires that all aviaries containing 20 or more birds be registered annually and comply with specifications -(registration \$1.00 per annum) Since there are more than 61 aviaries in Maryborough with more than 20 birds it is reasonable to assume that there are thousands of unregistered aviaries in Queensland. Also, since it is known that aviarists are leading in the illicit smuggling of birds in and out of the country and bird trafficking, it would seem that this is one section of the act which needs to be much more tightly policed.

(Further information obtainable from "Wambaliman" - a copy of which is held by the secretary. - Ed.)

CONTRIBUTION:

The Piccabeen Palm.

For me, one of the most interesting features of the recent trip to Mount Greville was the incredible stand of Piccabeen Palms for a distance of several hundred yards in the main gorge. These beautiful palms soared majestically to the top of the ravine. They were so dense that very little else grew under them, although a wild Piper species was common. Obviously, the condition in the ravine suited the Piccabeen to perfection.

I have not been able to discover much about this palm, apart from a short reference in Bailey's "Comprehensive Catalogue of Queensland Plants". It is a true palm, of the Order Palmae and Tribe Areceae. (Actually it does bear a striking resemblance to the Areca nut palm of Malaysia.)

Archontophoenix cunninghamii (Wendl.), apart from it's attractive name of "Piccabeen"; is also referred to as 'Pikki' in Moreton Bay and 'Wal-garri' by Cairns natives, according to Bailey.

It is often sold by nurserymen as Seeforthia cunninghamii, and sometimes occurs in a beautiful variegated form.

R.E. Treneer.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

1. MULTIPLE LAND USE.

Australians, no doubt reflecting their pioneering history, have tended to have a one-eyed attitude towards land usage. As a result farm land is exploited solely as such, and water catchments exclusively used for this purpose. However, with the rapid expansion of population, and, probably equally as significant, the accelerated demands of each individual associated with affluence, we are having to face up to the fact that land is a strictly limited resource, and must be managed to the best advantage of the community as a whole.

The forestry profession has long recognised the value of multiple use management, but the pressures from the large cities, especially for recreation, has focused attention on this subject in recent years. This has principally been directed toward public lands, but it is not difficult to foresee the day when the private lands will also come under scrutiny. The fact that this Club has derived considerable pleasure from days spent on private land exemplifies this point. Thus to a group concerned with their natural environment the concept of multiple use is of importance.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines "Multiple Use" thus: "The management of a given area (usually an administrative area of considerable size) for several different purposes, such as watershed protection, timber production and recreation. Since some uses are incompatible under certain circumstances, and since the maximum yields from all users are physical and biological impossibilities, a decision has to be made as to which uses will be given priority. In effect this means determining the use, or combination of uses, to which the various zones of a forest are suitable in the light of the natural environment, and of social and economic considerations."

A perfect example of good multiple use is seen in the Kosciusko mountains, where water is harvested for power generation, and for irrigation, and where excellent fishing and recreation facilities of all types are provided, all combined with complete protection of flora and fauna. Few would question the wisdom of such management, but it was necessary to exclude grazing, as this single purpose use, to which the area was formerly given over, practically excluded all the present day uses. Australia truly owes much to Bulder Byles and Alec Costin for their efforts in securing this area for National Park.

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Multiple Land Use (contd.)

There are many other examples of this approach, the commonest involving the obtaining of water from forest areas, (necessitating some modification of the logging practice therein) or recreation use combined with wild life protection, e.g. Girraween. However there have been some recent suggestions made by those wishing to "jump on the band waggon", which definitely do not fit in with the concept, notably sand mining of the Cooloola Sand Mass. Nevertheless the practice is spreading, and forest parks where recreation areas within State Forests are provided, are becoming a common feature in Victoria, and are receiving wide public acceptance.

When faced with such decisions, however, one comes up against the problem of how to evaluate things such as recreational value with another use yielding monetary return. The benefits from recreation are rarely direct financial gains, and as people do have votes their very real desires cannot be overlooked. Displeasing as it may be to many, the only practical denominator for all forms appears to be the dollar. (Incidentally any suggestions as to a suitable working alternative would be gratefully received, but remember it is comparisons that are the essential feature.)

The commonest method used is to assess consumer's surplus which attempts to assess what consumers would be willing to pay rather than forego their recreation. This does not suggest that such a charge, or, in fact, any charge should be made. Using this approach the value of the Mt. Macedon area in Victoria was put at \$3,950,000 - a very powerful argument for developing the area for recreation, especially when its value for timber production is about \$110,000.

Another problem facing decision makers is how many people can use a recreational park, and how much of it should be "developed". The N.S.W. National Parks & Wildlife Service has recently made some interesting suggestions on these matters. From studies on various parks adjacent to Sydney, particularly Royal, they suggest 0.5% is a reasonable percentage for development, although it may be up to 1%, and the carrying capacity of 4,000 visitors per developed area per year is a reasonable assessment of the maximum capacity of a National Park. In this text developed areas include such things as roads, walking tracks, and picnic facilities.

A rather disturbing conclusion drawn from these figures is that the National Parks surrounding our major cities, including Brisbane, will reach saturation point within the next ten years. Obviously the dedication of single purpose park

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Multiple Land Use (cont.)

areas in such areas is neither possible nor desirable, and multiple use of the existing public lands will become essential. The Sydney Water Board has achieved this by zoning its catchment areas into three recreational zones. The inner zone, close to the main water storage, is reserved exclusively for catchment (Compare this to Storm King). The inner zone is surrounded by an area of restricted usage where reputable groups such as bushwalkers, boy scouts, etc., are free to use the area as they desire, and finally the outer areas are open to all for recreation.

Nevertheless they face a problem of eutrophication (the new "in" word for conservationists) for the build-up of nutrients in storage water which promote the growth of algae and larger aquatic plants. This may necessitate bringing people on to the storages to catch fish in order to remove their stored nutrients from the water, especially nitrogen, which in large doses is every bit as harmful as the organic pesticides so commonly used on orchards.

As a sidelight to this it becomes obvious that farming on a catchment area is very undesirable, and represents a distinct health risk. When one contrasts this with the uproar associated with the introduction of fluorine to water supplies, it shows us as woefully one-eyed.

Yet another problem facing the decision makers is just how people use their recreation time. There has been a tendency to use overseas, particularly U.S.A., data, being the only records available, but studies such as those carried out by Linden and Rankin at Armidale suggest that this is quite unwise. In their survey, for instance, they showed Armidale residents spent 50.7% of their time in outdoor sports compared with 31.2% in the U.S.A., and only 2.2% in walking, camping, and hiking versus 20.1% in the U.S.A. Particularly notable was the 17.8% versus 7.0% for swimming.

IT IS IN THIS FIELD THAT A CLUB SUCH AS THIS COULD PLAY A VERY USEFUL ROLE, AS IT WOULD BE RELATIVELY EASY FOR US AS A GROUP TO MAKE A RECREATIONAL SURVEY, IF EVERYONE PARTICIPATED. SUCH A SURVEY WOULD REPRESENT A FIRST SUCH SURVEY FOR AN AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY TOWN, AND WOULD RECEIVE WIDESPREAD USE - ALL IN ALL A VERY PRACTICAL COMMUNITY PROJECT. I HOPE MEMBERS WILL EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON THIS.

As an example of what could be achieved one might take the consideration by a Council of providing a swimming pool. In such event many would undoubtedly consider the money would

Multiple Land Use (contd.)

be better spent elsewhere, perhaps on road work, or on forest park facilities, so that a survey showing what people really used, and to what extent, would be of the greatest value in making such a decision.

Finally in an attempt to promote members expressing their views in the magazine, I put forward the proposal (without a backing argument) that limited and controlled grazing should be permitted in the drier National Parks (obviously not in rain forests) as the most practical method of fire prevention available. As a rural community only too familiar with bush fires imagine what a big fire would do to our local National Park. Also remember that complete fire prevention is not possible even though it may be drastically reduced.

M. PASSMORE.

2. A Ruddy Turnstone?

If you are fascinated by birds - and I can hear from some quarters the echo of a fervent "who isn't?" - so I hastily explain that I mean the feathered variety - you soon learn to recognise most of the local ones and you could easily develop a slightly smug attitude about your newly acquired bird lore.

A rapid cure for this condition is a holiday at the coast, particularly in the warm climate of any Central Queensland beach resort. To begin with there are the land-based bush birds. You meet with pleasure a lot of familiar beaks and feathers, such as a whole host of Rainbow Birds with their characteristic throaty pirr and flashing sweep after insects. Another brilliant sight is the flock of Rainbow Lorikeets which come in twice a day to be fed on bread and honey mush. Finches and Thornbills, Whistlers, Fly-catchers and Honeyeaters. Welcome Swallows and White-breasted Wood Swallows a very familiar Little Wattle-bird and the black and white tribe Magpies, Pee-Wees. Willy-Wagtails and Butcher birds all abound. Add to these Turtle-doves and Crested Pigeons, birds of prey Swamp birds and the Kingfishers.

But then you come to the less familiar, the Ocean birds and the sea-shore waders. They are present in such numbers and such variety that you soon feel quite unable to identify them all. The Gulls, sometimes one-legged and even once no-legged, presumably after an unfortunate encounter with a hungry predator, are fairly easy and so too are the Terns. The Cormorants you know and the Straw-necked and White Ibis and the Herons are hard to mistake. Spur-winged Plovers are easily

A Ruddy Turnstone? (contd.)

recognised both by sight and sound but were those others Golden Plovers or Grey Plovers or both together? You can have your choice of Dotterels, Sandpipers in various shapes and sizes, Stints, Sanderlings, Curlews and a bird called Ruff and Reeve. Just how many of those were present in that large mixed flock feeding on the mud flat? Surely a Stilt should be recognisable and I really do know a Pied Oyster-catcher when I meet one. It was a happy day for me when I first definitely identified a Whimbrel and a Bar-tailed Godwit. Alas I have one ambition not yet fulfilled. I long to peer steadily through my binoculars and then cry in loud and joyful tones "Look there! Look a Ruddy Turnstone!"

Z. NEWMAN.

3. Close-Up of a Forest Community. (contd. from last month)

By kind permission of Stan Breedon of Walkabout Magazine.

The chorus of the tree cricket (*Paragryllacris combusta*) from the tree-tops is a prelude to greater activity during the night. The atmosphere is now filled with hushed, scuffling movements and noiseless stalkings which are so characteristic of the less salient nocturnal hunters.

The moth (*Boarmia canescaria*) leaves its position on the trunk of a wattle giving the appearance of a piece of bark flapping away into the darkness. Provided she can evade the frog-mouths, owls and bats, she will lay her eggs on a tree trunk. Some time later the comical, looping caterpillars will emerge to feed on the tender leaves of that tree.

From under the coarser bark at the base of a big tree, emerges a lone scorpion (*Lychas marmoreus*). Because of its poor eyesight, it has to blunder into its prey (usually a spider or insect) which it detects by the sensing hairs on its claws and other parts of the body. When it chances on a spider, for instance, often much bigger than itself and equipped with a formidable pair of fangs, the outcome is almost a foregone conclusion. The spider is rushed and held in the powerful grip of the claws of the scorpion which then arches its tail and drives home the poison-fed spike on the end of it with uncanny accuracy. The whole affair is over in a fraction of a second.

If a female scorpion finds a mate this too seems to be by accident. The outcome of this encounter follows the same pattern as the previous one; it is merely delayed. If the male is unfortunate enough to meet her, he will take her claws

Close-up of a Forest Community (contd.)

delicately in his and lead her around in a graceful, random dance throughout the night. At day-break the pair will retire behind some bark. The next night, however, only one reappears - the female.

A temporary relief from all this carnage is provided by the beautiful orange-and-black leaf beetle (*Paropsis 6-punctata*). Because it hides on the trunks of trees by day to escape the aerial attacks of birds, this vegetarian has to make its way up to the leaves on which it feeds at nightfall when many less peaceful individuals are on the look-out for an easy meal. Most attempts on its life, however, are quite ineffectual since at the slightest sign of danger it will retract all its appendages under a highly polished, curved suit of armour. Yet - and this is always the case in nature - there is at least one enemy against whom this defence is inadequate.

This time the exception is the huntsman spider (*Isopeda immanis*), which can drive its stout fangs clean through the twin shields of the beetle's back.

These huntsman (a most appropriate name) hunt in much the same way as the smaller jumping spiders, but because of their tremendous size, they have to be especially adapted to move freely in the confined space of their habitat - between loose bark and trunks of the eucalypts.

These adaptations are in the form of a remarkably flattened body and horizontally jointed legs. The legs allow them to run with great speed without raising their joints. This explains how they can disappear into such narrow crevices. As well as these features, they have pads of special adhesive hairs on their feet, allowing them to walk on an almost smooth, vertical surface.

Huntsman spiders are almost entirely restricted to Australia; only a few isolated species are found elsewhere. This may be because few trees are so well suited to their way of life as the eucalypts.

The bigger female deposits her eggs, several hundred in number, in a flattened, tough, silken sac which she carries with her wherever she goes; but she will sometimes leave it in a carefully prepared hiding place, though never venturing far. When she has selected such a spot she will join the loose bark to the tree with a wall of silk, enclosing herself and her eggs. This wall will keep out chance intruders and vegetable matter falling down the tree. Next, she anchors her precious egg-sac with a number of guys and stays, then stands guard - eight

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Close-up of a Forest Community (contd.)

watchful eyes quick to detect danger and two needle-sharp fangs even quicker to despatch it. Occasionally, she cuts through the encircling silk to hunt for food.

In the gecko (*Peropus variegatus*), the lizard of the night, we have another good example of adaptation. It has a pattern of brown spots and stripes to make it blend with its environment; it has big, staring eyes to give it better vision in its wanderings; it has toes provided with big disks (not suction pads) studded with microscopic hooks to allow it to walk on a nearly perfect smooth surface, even when upside-down.

These attributes make it an exceptionally well-equipped hunter. When in pursuit of food, it will either stalk and jump its prey from some distance or give chase with its amusing, hopping gait. If it catches the poor unfortunate, it will swallow it in one gulp, unlike the snake-eyed skink which has to go through many contortions to swallow even a fly.

The flightless larvae of a shield bug (*Theseus modestus*), like the leaf beetle, is a vegetarian and has to move up a tree trunk at nightfall. It feeds high up on the thin twigs, piercing them with its rostrum (a type of sucking tube which folds under the body when not in use) and sucking the plant's juices. As this bug larvae has neither wings nor protective armour, it is very vulnerable to attacks. Strangely enough, its main enemy is another bug - the red and black assassin bug (*Hemithysa rufovarialis*). This cut-throat of the community has a very effective weapon of offence and defence - a sharp rostrum supplied with a poison deadly to the small invertebrates and painful to man. This same rostrum is used to suck the body juices from a freshly-killed victim.

Finally we find in this community a midget amphibian - the toadlet (*Pseudophryne bibronii*), whose maximum length is a mere $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. From its hiding place on the lower part of trees, this plump, red-brown animal often heralds the wet weather with a series of soft, plaintive croaks. It can do without water for months, staying motionless in its sheltered hiding place, sometimes timidly coming out at night.

That is nearly 24 hours in the life of a forest community. There are many more species to be found, of course, and the inhabitants may vary from place to place. Although many of these animals are equipped with poison fangs or stings, nearly all are harmless to man. The scorpion and huntsman spider, probably the most fearsome-looking pair, will always take flight unless cornered or maltreated. Most of them will respond to kindness, and some can be made into the most delightful pets.

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Outing to "NUNDUBBERMERE" or "SEVERN RIVER FALLS" on
Sunday 25th July.-

Though rather an inaccessible area - a road is available,
basically good except the last 3 miles - which is only a bush
track, but quite safe for cars.

Cars will assemble at the Park (opposite the Civic Centre)
and depart at 9.30 a.m. - Nats. signs will be erected. but
perhaps details may be necessary for late comers. With a few
land marks noted.

Miles.

- 0. Park -- Proceed along Pikedale Road.
- 5.5 Left on to Nundubbermere Road (sign board)
- 7.7 End of bitumen ("Spring Plains") straight ahead on
gravel road.
- 9.6 Grid.
- 10.0 Grid.
- 10.8 Pass S.J. Sweets property.
- 11.1 Grid.
- 11.7 Grid.
- 13.3 Nundubbermere Boundary Gate.
- 13.9 Nundubbermere Homestead seen on left.
- 14.3 Grid.
- 14.8 Grid.
- 15.9 On left "Kenmare".
- 16.5 Pearsby boundary Grid.
- 17.3 Grid - (Homestead on right.)
- 17.7 At this point leave the Nundubbermere - Pearsby Road
going through the gate on the left hand side of the
road.
- 18.4 A gate.
- 18.9 The bush track forks take right hand fork.
- 20.2 Gate. (Note 12 wire dog fence built in 1886.)
The mountain on right is Mt. Malakoff.)
- 20.4 Destination.

From this point there is a very steep little climb down
to the river - on a spur between the River and Monday Creek.
The fall is not very high and only spectacular in flood -
However, the rock formations are excellent, and a rich
coloured rock face is attractive. It is hoped to make a
trip up the river to see an area sometimes referred to as
"Lowe's Waterhole" or "Koina's Tanks" - The latter name comes
from the interesting round holes worn in the rock, as even
as tanks - (These are $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ miles upstream)

Climb down to the river is 300 - 400 yards only.-

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Outing to NUNDUBBERMERE (contd.)

These falls form a natural barrier to indigenous fish - from the lower parts of this great river system.-

The following article appearing in the Stanthorpe Border Post - on the 10th February 1892 - with regards to these falls may be of interest.-

"Mr. Barton writes suggesting a benefit for the inhabitants of this locality and an endeavour to make one more attraction to the many attractions that this town and district is blessed with - besides salubrious invigorating climate, also wonderful fruit growing capabilities, that is the introduction of fish to the upper parts of these streams.. I would suggest blasting away two bars of rock, that are the only existing expediments to fish ascending these waters. - This could be effected for less than £100 - The advantages attached would be immense, in fact hard to estimate its value - I'm willing to head the list with £2- 2- 0. for this purpose - It's believed it will "catch on" with the townspeople-" (Mr. Barton was the Local Member.)

It is most pleasing that Mr. Barton's scheme lapsed for lack of interest - and as far as we know his two guineas was all that was collected - for the project - What good fortune it was for us - the Naturalists - who enjoy these areas to-day.

Good grip walking shoes are necessary for the day.

Jean Harslett.

DONT FORGET THE A.G.M.

WEDNESDAY 28th JULY

8pm C.W.A. HALL

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