

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING OF THE SLANTHORPE FIELD NATURALISTS  
HELD IN THE QCWA ROOMS ON FEBRUARY, 24th 1987.

Present 25 Apologies 5

WELCOME President Jean Harslett opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

MINUTES Moved by Ailsa Wilkinson and seconded by Bob Lacey that the minutes be taken as read in the Club Newsletter and confirmed. Carried

CORRESPONDENCE Inward: Journals and Newsletters from the following Toowoomba Bushwalkers, Queensland Naturalist, National Parks Association, Darling Downs Naturalist, Chinchilla Field Nats. Richmond Valley Field Nats. There was no outward correspondence. It was moved by Frank Wilkinson seconded Robin McCosker that the inward correspondence be received. Carried.

FINANCE Balance as at 26/11/86 \$161.03, Receipts for month \$77.20 less expenses totalling \$88.65 leaving a credit balance of \$149.58. It was moved by Joan Stevenson seconded by Frank Wilkinson that the report be received and the following accounts be passed for payment- Room Rent \$6.00, Magazine Duplication \$5.00 Magazine postage \$13.00. Carried.

OUTING REPORT given by Dore McCosker and Jean thanked her for the report.

NEXT MEETING. Unfortunately Niel Mungall will not be available to give us a talk on his year in Finland for our next meeting. Ray Marsden will step into the breach and arrange an evening in the Birdsville country.

NEXT OUTING March 21-22nd will be a camp out to the Emmaville District. Dore McCosker and Roy Werner will go out to the area and organise an itinerary which will appear in the next newsletter.

GENERAL BUSINESS President reported that "This will be your last bulletin" was inadvertently stamped on some of the magazines last month. This is incorrect and should be ignored.

WELCOME TO VISITOR Jean introduced Gunther Schmida who gave us a brief introduction to his book "Cold Blooded Australians."

SPECIMENS

Jean Harslett brought in a small animal(frozen) which Roy Werner had found dead on the road near "Lindsay View". Jean reported that it fitted the description of a PHASCOGALE. It was the approximate size and colour of a rat, but had a more pointed nose and sharp carnivorous teeth and a long brush tail. The hind feet were distinctive in that it had long sharp claws for scampering along branches and also a distinct pad for walking on.

According to the "good book" it is rather rare but, because of its nocturnal habits and the fact that it lives in trees and nests in hollow limbs, it is even more rarely seen. It is a marsupial but has no pouch but rather a fold in the skin on the stomach which serves this purpose. A litter of up to 8 may be born but because of the mother's poor accommodation and not sufficient food sources, the casualty rate is high.

It feeds on insects and small lizards and when hunting it moves about with great agility and rapidity. Apparently at mating time the males become very excited and usually die afterwards - no wonder it is a rare animal.

Jean also brought along a dead(also frozen) Buff Breasted Rail which had been found by May Prentice on the road near Amosfield. It is a small bird somewhat like a waterhen and has the same tail flicking habit and spends most of its time on the ground. It is light brown and grey in colour with a buff coloured breast, and an overall dappled appearance. It is a rare visitor to this area but is more common on the coast. It migrates down from the Islands to the north, particularly the Phillipines.

Brian McDonagh brought in a small specie of a Cup Moth larvae. (The larvae spins a small hard egg shaped cocoon on the branchlets of -usually- gum suckers and when leaving, the adult cuts out a circular top and leaves a distinct cup shaped receptacle). Brian pointed out that the "grubs" were brushed against when they had their stingers erected in two short rows along their backs they sting and the larger ones sting even worse. (Quite unpleasant.)

CLOSURE

The meeting was closed and the members then enjoyed the guest speakers Rob McCosker and Peter Langdon who showed slides of their trip to Western Australia around the South West corner of that state. The slides were very interesting and good of the area, particularly the wide variety of wild flowers. Unfortunately it rained heavily most of the time they were speaking and so much of what they had to say was lost.

A vote of thanks was carried by acclamation.

Tom Archer (Acting Secretary)  
for D. Archer.



OUTING REPORTRIVERTREE OUTING.

By Leader Dore

Over 40 people enjoyed the drive to Rivertree where we visited the Wongabah Silver Mine on Mr. Beddow's property and later cooled off at the Clarence River crossing with a dip in the river and a paddle in the canoe. I hope our two overseas students enjoyed their outing.

We are grateful to Mr. Beddow for granting us entry to his property.

The demolition of the old Amosfield school prompted me to point out some of the changes that have occurred since the early days of settlement - the changes in industry and fluctuation of population.

At "Lindsay View" Roy Werner's sharp eyes spotted the little Phascogale on the road. It is a pretty little native animal that we had not seen before. The shy nocturnal habits of so many of our indigenous animals keep most Australians totally unaware of their presence.

I noted with concern, the spread of yet another noxious weed - the ragweed that can seriously affect many asthma sufferers.

It had been a good season, the grass was long and the cattle in good condition. They were congregated in the shade of the trees, especially the denser shade of a fig tree planted about 30 years ago near the home.

Near the mine were a few ripe blackberries and a creeper with brightly coloured berries - *Stephania japonica*. Scattered scarlet blooms of the *Callistemon* brightened the trees along the creek.

It was interesting to see some of the original tramtrack at the mine. Overgrown cuttings around the Hillside indicated where the track had carried the ore to the treatment site. Some specimens of "Fool's Gold" were found in the scrap heaps.

We pondered over the massive iron machinery, the heavy chimneys fitted with baffles and vents and wondered at the skill of the teamsters who would have transported it to the site where it now lies abandoned and obsolete.

In its heyday there would have been a large population at Rivertree, who would have had to organise their own entertainment and so had a public hall, school and tennis courts. Mail service was twice a week from Wilson's Downfall and our tireless historian Jean Harslett came across a notice in Stanthorpe paper 14/12/1870 "Rivertree and Stanthorpe line of coaches will run twice a week between Stanthorpe and Rivertree Silverfield - £1 each way. Parcels 5lbs and under 30lb @ 2d per lb. Richardson and Einam, Proprietors."

It is interesting to note that there was no hotel at the mine. The management did not approve and so the nearest access to that liquid refreshment was at Wilson's Downfall, 21 steep winding miles away.

Our next outing will also be to a mining district - this time tin. There are many of the original homes to be seen - dear little cottages built in 2 or even 3 sections of weatherboard or corrugated iron, and plenty relics of the early days.



RIVERTREE OUTING

From Jean Harslett.

On the Rivertree outing and along the road close to the Beddow's home- beneath a spreading tree were a group of cattle enjoying its shade. The role of the tree was made up of many parts and the canopy a bright green, contrasting with the grey-greens of the Eucalypts. Long tassels of small yellowish-green flowers hung down like miniature bunches of grapes. Several of these trees are scattered around Rivertree and one or two isolated samples on the historic Davidson Gap track, suggesting that the earliest users planted them along the way.

The Herbarium in Brisbane has kindly identified specimens sent down as *Phytolacca dioica* - and it is a native of South America. Its common names are many and are as difficult to remember as its botanical name and include - Bella, Sombra and Poke Pine. It is quite a fast growing tree, giving dense leafy shade, some are further south in Australia and it has been extensively planted in California, both as shade and shelter.

ROY WERNER'S ANIMAL

The animal is the Brush Tailed Phascogale (common name "Tuan") related to the Dasyurus (native cats or quolls), this is the most arboreal of the group. Notice the wonderfully modified foot for varied activities - the hind foot can also be rotated backward thus enabling it to climb up or downwards with equal ease.

Habitat - reliable rainfall required 500 - 2000mm annually, on ridges 600m in altitude. Sleeps in lined nest- eats such dainties as spiders and centipedes, small predators it could subdue.

The specimen was found dead on the road near "Lindsay View" on 23rd February 1987 by Roy Werner. The Brisbane Museum was interested to have the specimen.

SPECIMEN FOUND BY MAY PRENTICE.

This bird specimen was also a road casualty found near a swampy area on the road across Herding Yard Creek Amosfield February 1987. It is a beautifully marked bird, seldom seen as such close quarters, The Buff Banded Rail. It is not uncommon but rarely noticed, being shy and retiring and is more generally seen in coastal areas, but to have been noted on the highlands here several times in the last couple of years is interesting. It flicks its tail when nervous or frightened and readily seeks cover. The Rail is widely distributed in the Indian Ocean- New Guinea and the Phillipines, New Zealand.

Brian McDonagh also brought along a specimen of Tree Hoppers or Jasids. This variety can be on Eucalypt trees, they are sap suckers and colonies are attended by ants in various stages of development and maturity. Their defense is to make rapid and unexpected "peeps" evading possible attack.



MARCH OUTING

Date 21st and 22nd March

Time: 8am at Weeroona Park 21st

The next outing will be a camp out at Torrington and Emmaville mineral fields. This area has many examples of alluvial and reef tin mining and a variety of machinery and methods of extracting and treating the tin, including a stamper battery in operating condition and a Cornish buddle. The area also offers excellent scenery and a wide variety of birdlife and autumn wildflowers.

Departing at 8am on Saturday 21st March, we will travel south along the New England Highway to the southern outskirts of Deepwater (111km), then turn right to Emmaville (27km). Travelling time approx 1 hour 45 mins. The remainder of the morning will be spent viewing points of interest at Emmaville. We then backtrack to Tent Hill (5km) and turn left onto the Torrington Road, left again at 22.5km at stone cairn with letters B.K. Camp site is .4km on left side of track. Water is available in creek 100 metres west of camp site but should be boiled for drinking. A dam suitable for swimming is 300 metres along the track. Torrington is 2.5km further north from cairn and turnoff.

Camp Leaders are Dore McCosker (811787) and Roy Werner (812652). Rumour has it that several people want to set out on Friday for the campsite and perhaps they should contact Robin McCosker (835217)

MARCH MEETING.

Ray Marsden has his slides of a recent short trip to Birdsville for the famous races in readiness for the meeting at the CWA on March 25.



THE BALLAD OF BOONOO BOONOO

There is a ballad of Boonoo Boonoo,  
Where men are many and girls are few,  
Where life in the bush is one long battle,  
And local talk is always of cattle,  
Where twice a week the Mailman's call,  
Heralds the mail from Wilson's 'fall,  
Where by the week the people are willing  
to paddock bullocks, at per head, a shilling.  
Come cross London Bridge up the Nine Mile Hill to Reserection Creek,  
And now we're at the Fourteen Mile, we've come to the place we seek.  
That's Hurtz's house that hides behind,  
A tennis court of the bush-land kind,  
Where the members play in hobnailed boots  
and the ball when volleyed skyward shoots,  
to the hefty strokes of the cattlemen  
Who look at home in the branding pen.  
Further along is the boarding house;  
'Twas a pub in the days of old,  
Where many a digger stopped to rouse,  
About his fruitless search for gold.  
For this was once a mining town,  
Where they sought for gold and tin,  
But the diggers themselves didn't make a brown,  
So they turned the digging in.  
They took up a special piece (under crown land lease),  
And started the cattle game,  
Making their brass out of grass,  
Instead of digging deep for the same,  
Neglecting the reefs that lie underneath,  
And are mostly called "wild cats".  
For all through the drought they've just been about,  
Topping the market for "fats".  
Yes, this is the ballad of Boonoo Boonoo,  
Where the hills are green and the skies are blue,  
And if you're fond of timber tall  
Or would like to see a waterfall  
That's a thousand feet from top to toe,  
And hear the waters as down they go,  
Then come and enjoy yourself in plenty,  
For the Christmas holidays of nineteen-twenty.

(This poem, by an unknown poet, was loaned by Irma Rickard and Dore McCosker. The ballad was found among papers belonging to the late Mrs. Martha Shaw, formerly Martha Fox of Boonoo Boonoo.

As our last outing also came in contact with Wilson's 'fall  
I thought it a good time to include the poem. Ed.)