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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, Q4380.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 1987 - 1988

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JOAN FERRIS

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

Single - \$6.00

Family \$10.00

Donation .50c per family per
meeting to cover rent.

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 newsletter.

Greetings once again for this our Bi-Centennial Year 1988.

Things being a little different in this year, we had an outing in January for the first time but no meeting.

Everyone seemed to think a magazine should be printed for this month, so I thought I had better do something about it. Ed.

Minutes of the previous meeting were printed in the January magazine and there was no meeting in January, so no minutes for this magazine.

The first outing in the Bi-Centennial year was to the local Girraween National Park with Robin McCosker as leader. It was only a half day outing but some members took the opportunity to have a picnic lunch at Girraween before joining the outing to the Junction.

Thirty-six people were welcomed by president Ray Marsden before he handed over to leader Robin McCosker. Janet and Colin Hockings were welcomed back after Janet's recent operation, university students Ben and Ian were also welcomed. Ian's pet interest is birds and Ben seeks out reptiles and frogs. Bob Luttrell joined the group from Warwick and Fred Simpson came from the Gold Coast, new member Doris Spence brought along her daughter and son-in-law Bob and Mary Clarke, Helen Neal again was able to join the outing and Julie Brown and children joined in the fun. Bob and Esme Lacey, though not able to do the walk, spent the time birdwatching in the picnic area.

The Junction is about a mile west of the information centre and we reached it by following along Ramsey Creek to the junction with Bald Rock Creek. At the junction, Bald Rock Creek flows over bare rock for about half a mile, there are many rapids and cascades. There are some good examples of water worn pot-holes, These have been made by the strong current swirling rocks and sand around in the same place until a pot hole is formed.

There had been a good deal of rain in the area and the group could not traverse the track along Ramsey Creek but had to aim for higher ground. The slopes of the hill to the creek bank are fairly steep with a lot of exposed rocky faces, these being wet from seepage, needed care to negotiate.

The junction was quite a spectacular sight with a great flow of water - the weather was perfect. Some of the adults and most of the children went swimming. Others went into the water, not quite of their own accord, when trying to cross the swollen Ramsey Creek (this is not at all good when one is toteing an expensive camera).

The delight of the day was seeing the spiny red crayfish, these 'yabbies' are quite large and of a wonderful red colouring. For Many, it was the first introduction to the Corchie (*Euastucas spinifer*) ?? and many photographs were taken. This is about the most northern habitat of the Corchie as they prefer the cooler and better aerated waters of the rocky mountain streams. The

Outing Report(continued)

ordinary blue yabbie is not so fussy and is quite happy burrowing into mud banks.

Also seen were a number of 'slitheries' a small fish approximately 20-30cm long and black in colour - they are known as Mountain Trout. These fish also prefer aerated streams with sandy bottoms.

Among the rocks there was still some colour from wild flowers? in bloom and some members saw some yellow tufted honey eaters.

From the western side, most of the members crossed the turbulent flow of water with assistance from convenient rocks and bushes. Some recorssed Bald Rock Creek to return to the cars on the Eas tern side of Ramsay Creek while others followed the walking track back to the picnic area.

All voted it an excellent outing and, it seems certain, that the January outing is here to stay.

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QUEENSLAND MOUNTAIN TROUT.

Supplied by Jean Harslett from 'Guide to Fishes ' by E.M.Grant.

The Queensland Mounntain Trout, *Galaxias oconnori*, is closely related to the 'Lolly Tail'. It is fairly common in clear mountain streams west of the Great Dividing Range - only just south of Stanthorpe and below Cunningham's Gap. It differs from *Galaxias* in that the fin has only 12 rays instead of 16-19 of the other one. It occurs at Wyrbera in Queensland.

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From Jean Harslett

I rang the Queensland Museum and spoke to Mr. Davis about the large crayfish of the *Euastacus* genus seen on the recent outing in Girraween.

With regards to the large crayfish of the *Euastacus* genus there seems to be some vagueness - partly created by the very big ranges in the colour of the adult specimens.

The four species involved all belong to the *Euastacus* genus a and range in colour from rich bright red and dark shades and some with pale blue and white markings.

A bright red species(also variable) *Euastacus spinifer* - the usual habitat is in the region of the Parramatta River with other references coming from SE Queensland and NE New South Wales. Another species *E. Cunninhami* - habitat Cunningham's Gap.

The Lamington species ranging from pale blue and white markings to red and dark shades is nominated as *E. sulcatus*. *E. Suttoni* - habitat nominated as Wyberba and Glen Aplin, shows great variation of colour. so there may be two species involved. As indeed, all the above species may have some doubt in specific rank.

HOST FAMILIES.

Last week(early February) we were attracted to bird calls of a petulant, raucus and perpetual nature. Investigations showed they came from three very large and extremely demanding, hungry channel-billed cuckoos.

They were being fed by two much smaller, lean and wornout looking currawongs, which had been unfortunate enough to find themselves rearing these ungainly looking and hugh offspring.

Size wise the young channel-billed cuckoos appeared to be almost adult, but of course, they still bore some of the characteristics of juvenile plumage with pale buff necks and back, wings grey with deep buff tips to feathers, and pale breasts and white flanks. Their calls were noticably rather like a strong version of a young currawong- which is possibly a useful advantage- Most of us are familiar with the adult call of the channel-billed cuckoo which many people portend coming storms, and also gives the cuckoo the common names of 'Storm Birds' or 'Flood Birds'.

Their bill is large and early settlers, seeing them flying above the tree tops thought they might be related to exotic 'Horn bills' which have noticably large bills. To currawongs, the cuckoos bill, wide open and demanding, must appear monstrously huge.

Currawongs are probably the most commonreluctant hosts, but magpies, crows and even hawks are their victims too, the latter being mote their size.

I had the feeling that the pair of currawongs probably thought'this family business isn't all it's cracked up to be.'

Jean Harslett.

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Observations along Quart Pot Creek.

While playing one of my favourite roles, that of grandmother, I was walking along the path in the beautiful Bi-Centennial beautification park with a young grandson. He was looking for the ducks but couldn't see any. I said I thought I could see some on a rock near the waters edge(I didn't have my glasses on) but he looked at me as if I was already 'round the bend'. As we got closer even I could see that they were not ducks but fully grown turtles sunning themselves on the rock. As we approached, they scurried back into the water.

After time in the adventure park we again checked the rock and this time there were six small turles there, some very small and some up to saucer size.

The improved waterway is bringing a lot of bird life into our everyday lives and we are able to view the life in the water as well due to the easy access along the creek banks.

More notes on Euastucas spinifer.

A Corchie (Euastucas spinifer) confronted away from its retreat throws up its claws in an impressive display of threat, which it holds for a few moments before scuttling away. The brilliant colouring of its carapace, particularly underside, makes this one of the most colourful of the crustaceans.

The stimulus which makes some species of fresh water crayfish leave their burrows or creek bank to wander, usually during rainy nights, is not understood. It may be related to changes in water level, colonization of new habitats, feeding or mating needs.

They are quite large, some specimens being recorded with a body length up to 20 cms excluding the nippers. The general colour is greenish brown with a variable amount of red on undersurface and tips and spines. Specimens with extensive red areas are particularly impressive.

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NEXT OUTING.

Sunday February 21st, to Rocky River area with Tom Archer as Leader.

This is more of a scenic drive with a swim at the end, so not much walking is needed. Meet at Tenterfield park at 9am. Park is on the right after crossing Tenterfield Creek. The first stop will be at Billirumba Creek for smoko, then on to Rocky River for lunch. There is a swimming hole there and good running water for canoes, or anything that floats.

Remember. Park in Tenterfield at 9am, is the time and place of meeting on Sunday February 21.

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NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting will be held in the CWA Rooms in Victoria Street at 8pm on February 24. The programme will be presented by Esme Lacey and Frank and Ailsa Wilkinson on their recent trip to England.