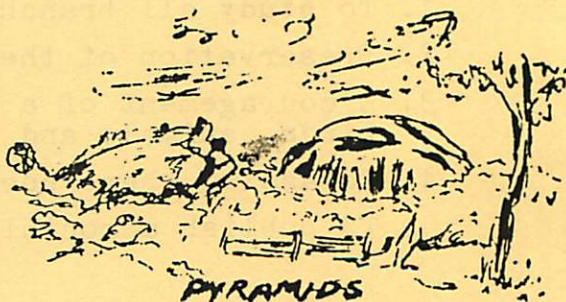


THE  
**GRANITE BELT  
NATURALIST**



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.

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MEETINGS - 4th WEDNESDAY of each month in the Q.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

Rent donation per family per meeting

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.

Minutes of the General Meeting of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalists Club, held in the QCWA rooms, Victoria Street.  
Wednesday October 25th 1989, at 8 p.m.

Present - 26

Apologies 4

Opening President Ray Marsden opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

Minutes Moved by Leila Hermanssen and seconded by Mary Walters that the minutes of the September 27th Meeting be taken as read in the October Newsletter. Carried.

Correspondence - Inward received from -

1. Australian Associations Directory.
2. Card of thanks from Esme Lacey and Family.
3. Subs received from J S Geeves and M B Thomas; Ann Gibbs; Kris and Margaret Carnell; and D Holly.
4. Orange Agricultural College re Land Resource Management course.
5. LETS Granite Belt.
6. Glenrow Station Camping information.
7. Hancock Public Farming.

Newsletters and Journals -

The Darling Downs Naturalist.  
"Footprint" Toowoomba Bush Walkers Club.  
"Urimbirra" Chinchilla Field Naturalists Club, Sept and October.

Outward sent to:-

1. Letter of thanks to Bill Jubb.
2. "Round the Ridges" 4QS, with outing and meeting notices for October. Moved by Val White, Seconded by Ailsa Wilkinson. Carried, that Inward be received and the Outward be endorsed.

Treasurers Report - Treasurer Julia read her report which shows a credit Balance as at October 25th of \$260.74. Julia moved the report be received and the following Accounts be passed for payment Room Rent \$8.00; Magazine Postage for Nov. \$21.00; Magazine duplication \$6.00. Seconded by Joan Stevenson. Carried.

October 24th Outing Report - Val reported that a most interesting day under the leadership of Noel Collins-Ruby to the Sugarloaf area seeing a variety of places and things. A letter of thanks is to be sent to Noel.

November Outing - Campout under leadership of Leila Hermanssen. Full details of this outing will be in Nov. Newsletter.

November Guest Speaker - For Nov. 22 meeting Errol Walker will take us on a trip to Lake Eyre and Flinders Ranges. program titled "Lake Eyre & Flinders Ranges Re-visited".

Christmas Breakup - Dec. 3rd. at Geoff Marsden's Kingston Rd.  
1/2 day - walk down creek and across to Finney's Falls is on program.

Specimens - Colin Hockings brought a New Holland Honey Eater which he s poke on.  
Ray s poke on a piece of clay bottle with a lead ring on it.  
Val brought some pieces of China found on October outing.

General Business - Mention to 4QS when November notices sent that the new time of broadcast is a bit early -- is a later time possible.

After Meeting Program - President Ray introduced our Guest speaker. Rob McCosker who took us on a very enjoyable trip to the centre. The photography was expertly done and made a very interesting program. Many thanks Rob.

Dorothy Archer.  
Hon. Sec.

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OUTING REPORT TO SUGARLOAF.  
by Leader Val White.

The Sugarloaf outing on Sunday was a continuation of the May outing. We left the park at 9.25 am with 18 members and visitors attending. We proceeded to the site of a miner's camp where we saw some artifacts in a dump, such as pottery shards, bottles, buttons and handmade nails. A coot was observed on a nearby creek, other birdlife was quite prolific. We walked back to the cars seeing a baronia, hakea and a few other native flowers. After lunch we proceeded to the next site where we inspected the remains of an old tavern. We had done this on the previous outing, but, as there were members present who had not been with us on the May excursion, we decided to repeat this part for their benefit.

Next we went on to Brown's Gully where some of the richest tin in the district was won. We inspected the grave of an old miner, unfortunately the guard fence is in bdd repair and it will not be many years before all traces disappear and another piece of our early history will have vanished. Some of us decided to do some tin scratching and got a 'show'. The leeches, in the creek were also very friendly. Time was marching on so we went back to the cars, had another cuppa and called it a day.

There are still a lot more historical sites to see in this area, so hopefully we will be able to make another visit next year. Thanks to fellow members for making the effort to attend the outing.



SATIN BOWER BIRD, with an eye to keeping "WITH IT"

Our Satin Bower Bird (*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*) keeps with fashion and regularly changes his bower displays. Some of the changes include blue clothes pegs as a major feature, or on other occasions the main features were blue ties from the vegetable carton packs used on the farm, or blue feathers of Crimson Rosellas. Ofcourse, added to this are the blue 'treasures' or extras such as marbles, blue straws, blue biro tops, blue comb, a few small children's toys etc, etc.

All of a sudden there has been a new change, following one of our farm changes. For seventy years we have kept a cow or cows on this farm, but recently decided to make the change and dispose of the cows and the hand milking ties. Within a very short time all the old treasures were cast aside, and the blue tops of the 2 litre milk bottles, now have pride of place. Even the little ring below which breaks off when you open the bottle has been selected.

Indeed, two were placed side by side, in a neat geometrical design right at the entrance of the bower as a special 'Pièce de résistance' while the shapely tips of a book-leaf pine were laid in a neat and almost lace like pattern right inside the bower as a 'welcome mat'.

Perhapes the main reason for writing these few notes, is to say that for the first time (and its an old bower) the bower has been painted inside, and the adornment is blue - almost a 'jacaranda blue'! What is the plant die used? Where does it come from? The only quantity of blue resembling that shade are the falling flowers of the westeria. One frequently reads of the Satin Bower Bird crushing charcoal and mixing it with saliva to 'paint' the bower. There are records of the blue berries of the Dianellas being used, but they quickly get a fungoid smut and turn black. How often do they choose blue, or is our bower bird not only fashion conscious with the latest blue milk bottle tops, but also colour conscious with his interior decorations too. (One can see we cannot immediately change to 'Shape' milk with its yellow tops !!) Perhapes some of the members have seen the 'blue' painting, and if so it would be interesting to hear.

Some years ago a developing male (only part blue plumage) spent hours holding a long blue feather, from a Crimson Rosella in his bill, and bowing to his reflection in one of our windows. So intent was he that I could get quite close from inside, without disturbing him. Is this the young blade now so fashion conscious?

Jean Harslett.

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Notes from Thorndale.

From Claude and Mary Walters .

One morning last week I was looking for our pair of frog mouth owls. They were not in either of their usual roosting places. Instead I saw a koala sitting high up in a tall gum tree near the house. It was east to see because it was in a sparsely leafed section of the tree. We observed it during the morning but after lunch it had gone. We understand that it is unusual to sight a koala in this area.

What a thrill!!! Ed.

THE UNDARA LAVA TUBES.

From Joan Stevenson.

On a recent visit to North Queensland we took advantage of a trip to the Undara Lava Tubes. These new-found "Wonders of the World" are situated on private property near Mt. Surprise and accessible only by organised tour operators.

Undara, at 1200m above sea level, is the highest point in the area of many extinct volcanoes the youngest being 15000 to 30000 years old. Undara activity was different in that it had lava flows instead of an explosion. These flows have been measured and one is 37km long. Average tubes are 340m long and 18m deep with some 30km and the original flow of 18km. The tube system is the longest in the world. Temperatures of the lava was between 1175° and 1225° C.

The tube we visited was about 150m long and 20m wide and 10m high. The tube was like a semi-circle with the diameter being the solid flow of lava that cooled, and the arc being the cooling lava while the flow was still active. You could see the tidal marks parallel to the floor marking the number of different flows. As the roof and walls were solid lava, there were no markings of water seepages. Only one crack had tree roots penetrating, as the tubes are almost at ground level.

Bayliss cave is the longest at 1350m and has a small entrance and very foul air. Scientists have found 23 new species of insects in these high CO<sub>2</sub> caves. Near the entrances there are the normal spiders and cockroaches, but on going deeper into the darkness, these insects have no eyes. There is microscopic life on any tree roots and this survives only on the roots. Bats move from one cave to another.

Above ground there are many collapses caused by extreme gas pressure explosions in the tubes, these form broken lava rock depressions. Vegetation in them is different from the surrounding country of ironbarks and bloodwoods. They have softwood scrub with ferns, orchids, blue gums and bottle trees surviving on the greater moisture trapped by the rocks. Aerial views show these lines of vegetation very plainly and caused the investigation to find the reason for it. Rock wallabies and scrub turkeys are found in this vegetation.

The National Parks have taken over a large area of this system and expect to release 3 caves for public viewing shortly, because scientific tests are presumed to be complete on them.

Locals have known of this area for some time but they were only documented in 1972-74 by Ann Atkinson. New finds are being made by the owners of these cattle properties, who keep it as a restricted area. Only two private operators are allowed access at present.

There are lava tubes in Hawaii, which are still being formed, but are not as extensive as the Undara system which covers 1550 square kilometres with 23 cubic km of lava.

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The after meeting programme for November by Errol Walker is entitled "Lake Eyre and Flinders Ranges Revisited". The programme will be presented on November 22 and Errol has supplied a detailed report to compliment the programme.

LAKE EYRE AND FLIDERS RANGES REVISTED .

By Errol Walker.

When a school student, more than 30 years ago, geography was not always my favourite subject. Australian geography or "social studies" did hold a bit more interest.

We were taught to draw a map of our country, quite literally, "with our eyes closed". Most of our great land, we were reminded, was arid or desert country and, in those years, not many people dared face a potentially hazardous journey to the dead heart. Right in the middle of the continent was Alice Springs. A funny name for a town in the middle of a desert, we thought.

Just south east of 'The Alice' lies a huge lake in this desert. One of the great lakes of the world, this blue patch on maps, if correctly represented, should be white. Lake Eyre is a salt lake or, more correctly, a salt sheet - for beneath its salt surface lies a vast sea of mud and quicksand.

People who have actually been to the shores of this great inland sea of salt, are spread pretty thinly on the ground. I guess this is because any road access can be difficult and is best done in a 4WD vehicle. The track in is a 100km dead end trip.

The Walker family's 1988 bi-centennial holiday was to Lake Eyre and the Birdsville track with only a glimpse of South Australia's Flinders Ranges. This was our first experience driving solo into the desert country and we headed off with not a little apprehension.

Back from our adventurous holiday we were motivated to visit the Flinders for a longer look another year. This year 1989, travelling with friends in another 4WD, we explored the Flinders in greater detail and had the experience of seeing Lake Eyre again - this time in flood.

These two National Parks, the Flinders Ranges and Lake Eyre will be the subject of my slide programme for the November meeting.

The Flinders were a picture this winter, because 38" of rain had brought about a transformation of this normally dry landscape. Sturt desert pea was flowering profusely while Lake Frome and Lake Torrens were full for the first time this century.

In the Flinders, the ridge top tour was probably the highlight of our trip. So it should have been for \$40 per head and no biscuit with your morning coffee!!!!

See you next meeting.

Errol.

(Boy are we looking forward to sharing this trip with you! Many thanks Errol.) Ed.

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NOVEMBER OUTING CAMP-OUT TO HALF MOON.

The camp-out for November 18 and 19 is to be at Half Moon, on the property of Noel Bonner, nephew of Leila Hermansson - leader.

Cars are to leave Weeroona Park at 8am on Saturday November 18 and proceed to "Lindsay View" on George Bonner's property, which is the first turn on the right after the Undercliffe Falls turn-off.

On arrival here, we will have morning tea and transfer to the 4WD vehicles, which are needed to get down to Half Moon and Gilgurry.

## November Camp-out.

From "Lindsay View" it is a one hour drive to our destination at the foot of the eastern escarpment of Boonoo Boonoo River, where there is a good area to set up camp, near the river and not far from a waterhole suitable for swimming and fishing. It would be advisable to boil drinking water. It is usually much warmer down there than it is at the top or in Stanthorpe.

After setting up camp and having lunch, there will be an interesting walk up the river.

Because of the necessity to transfer to 4WD's, I would like to hear from those with 4WD's who can assist with transport and also from those who indeed to go on the camp-out, by November 15. Phone 861153. This will enable loads to be arranged, also we will need to have lightweight camping gear.

In the event of inclement weather making the drive down to Half Moon inadvisable, I will find alternate walks close by and we can camp at "Lindsay View".

Leila Hermansson - Leader.

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SPECIAL PROGRAMME PRESENTED BY TERRY AND THELMA RAYNER.

We are told that there is nothing new under the sun - perhaps that is right but Stanthorpe Field Naturalists were certainly treated to something "new" or different when Terry and Thelma Rayner of Dalby presented a programme on Cape York and national parks of South Africa.

Using tow projectors, the Rayners presented a superb slide show of the areas. While some members may have been to the top end or have seen slides of the area, this showing certainly highlighted every aspect of our northern tip.

The slides on the South African trip were quite magical, with the two images being shown one felt they were truly part of the expedition. The photography was extremely good and the commentary brought it all to life. We extended our grateful thanks to Terry and Thelma for making the effort to bright the slides across for us to see and to Jean Harslett for making the venue available for the night. After the impromptu showing an equally impromptu supper was served and members had time to talk with the Rayners, ask questions about the trip and also about photography techniques. The members were certainly privileged to have been able to see such a high class show. Many thanks to those involved.

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November programme: QCWA rooms Victoria Street Stanthorpe 8pm on November 22. Errol Walker will present "Lake Eyre and Flinders Ranges Re-visited".

November Camp-out: Leila Hermansson will lead the camp-out on November 18 and 19 to Half Moon. Leila wishes to have names of those able to offer 4WD vehicles and those needing transport by November 15. Phone 861153. If weather not suitable to proceed to Half Moon Leila has made alternate arrangements to camp at "Lindsay View". Cars will leave Weeroona Park at 8am November 18 for "Lindsay View".