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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, Q., 4380.

OFFICERS OF CLUB FOR 1988 - 1989

PRESIDENT	RAY MARSDEN (811 593)
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SECRETARY	DOT ARCHER (811754)
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YOUTH OFFICER	ROBIN MC COSKER
BUSHWALKING OFFICER	ERROL WALKER
LIBRARIAN	VAL WHITE
HON. AUDITOR	JOAN FERRIS

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 Stanthorpe Field Naturalists Club held on Wednesday May 23rd, 1990 in the Uniting Church Hall at 8 p.m.

Present - 21

Apologies - 6

Opening - President Ray opened the meeting at 8.20 p.m. and apologised to all present for delay in opening the meeting and the necessity for the change of venue. He then welcomed all present in particular David and Olive Hockings from Brisbane.

Minutes - It was moved by Herb. Colley and seconded by Tom Archer that the minutes of the April Meeting be taken as read in the May Newsletter and that they are a true record of the meeting.

Carried.

Correspondence - Inward was received from - 1. Australia Post re new word lettering to appear on our Newsletter wrapper by July 1st. As we still have 4 months supply of wrappers to use the Secretary will write to Australia Post to let them know we cannot do this before September.

2. Australia Conservation Foundation catalogue, Newsletter and Raffle ticket order form.

3. National Parks and Wildlife Services of N.S.W. - order form for book 'Managing Koala's in N.S.W.

Newsletters received from - 1. The Darling Downs Naturalists Club,

2. The Queensland Naturalist Club Inc. and 3. Toowoomba Bush walkers Club 'Footprint'.

Outward was sent to - 1. Division of Sports & Recreation in

2. Stanthorpe C.C. re their share in P.O.Box 154; Warwick

3. Toowoomba Radio Station 14Q.S. - May Outing and Meeting Notices.

Moved by Margaret Carnell and seconded by Brian McDonagh that the Inward be received and the outward endorsed. Carried.

Treasurer's Report - Julia Brown read her report which showed a credit Bal.

of \$304.00 at April 25th, 1990; Total Receipts of -6.50 and expenditures for month of \$8.00 which leaves a bank credit balance of \$302.54 as at May 23rd, 1990.

Julia moved her report be received and the following accounts be passed for payment. May Mag. Duplication \$6.00; May Room Rent \$8.00; June Mag. Postage \$21.00; Aus. Post Mag. Registration \$50.00.

Seconded by Jean Harslett and Carried.

May 20th Outing Report - Outing to Mt. Colliery led by Nancy and Ron Gooding was enjoyed by 40 people. Walks up Gorge in the morning and to Hoffmans Falls in the afternoon were very pleasant with lots of interesting plants and bird life. The club extends sincere thanks to Nancy and Ron for a most enjoyable day.

Campout weekend of June 9th, 10th and 11th - as published in May Newsletter is under the leadership of Errol and Annette Walker to Severn River Falls and Gorge; MacIntyre Falls via Ashford; Limestone Caves.

Errol would like all planning to attend to phone him at 812008 before the weekend.

NO OUTING ON JUNE 24th.

June 27th after meeting program will be either Jean Harslett or Desley

May 22nd Outing - Browns Gully - Sugarloaf Rd. under leadership of Val White.

Specimens

Margaret Carnell brought a long eared bat to be identified.
Quite a number of plants from the May outing were brought to be identified.

Desley McDonagh brought photographs taken on the Murrindindi River walk near Melbourne.

Brian McDonagh reported sighting an unusual 4" long slug with a red pattern on its back.

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 9.05 p.m.

After Meeting Program -

Ray turned the evening over to our Guest Speaker David Hockings who is well known to our Club members.

David showed us a very interesting and entertaining program on Australian Plants he saw growing in various parts of the U.S.A. while on a lecture tour there.

All present enjoyed this very much and showed their appreciation by acclamation.

Many thanks David.

Dorothy Archer, Hon. Secretary.

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I would like to express congratulations to Herb and Esme on their marriage - and wish them all the happiness in the world - they deserve it. God Bless and best wishes from us all.

Dot. A.

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LIST OF PLANTS FROM MAY 20th OUTING - IDENTIFIED BY DAVID HOCKINGS.

Native Olive with orange berries - *Elaeodendron australe*
White cedar with yellow berries - *Melia Azederach* var. *australasica*
Chain Fruit with orange red berries - *Alyxia ruscifolia*
Mallotus Philippensis or Red Kamala
Native Grape with purple berries - *Cissus antarctica*
Pepperina and Ink weed
Cruel Plant - fruit looks like a wild choko - named because it catches moths and butterflies by their proboscis when they feed on the flowers
Tongue Fern - *pyrrhosia* sp.
Bell Fruit - *Codonocarpus attenuatus*

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The foll wing was sent to us by the New South Wales Bird Atlassers

Every one has heard a bird cheep, chirrup, trill or call in their backyard or out in the bush, and wondered "What bird is that?"

New South Wales has approximately 540 different species of birds, and for the vast majority of these birds, their environment has undergone great changes since European settlement. Any native species, unable to adapt to this pressure, has, in less than 150 years, had its population decreased, and its potential to adapt to further alterations, severely constrained.

The New South Wales Bird Atlassers is a group of people of all ages,

scattered throughout the state, with the aim of collecting information on the native birds wherever they occur, assess their requirements, and possibly provide an answer to the virtual extinction of many of our less-adaptable feathered friends. This data is being gathered on an on-going basis, so that, over a period of time, an accurate registrar is built up, containing information on the habitat preferences of all native birds in this state. To do this, we need many more supporting members gathering information in each of the survey areas.

We have divided the state - and that includes the ACT and Lord Howe Island - into 10' grid covers an area of about 16 kilometres square.

Our latest publication, The Birds of N.S.W. - A Working List, is now available to members. Our long-term aim is to produce An Atlas of the Distribution of Native Birds in N.S.W.

Anyone can become a member, and each member's level of activity is left to the individual to determine. Regular activities include field trips to various parts of the state, camps and meetings to discuss our progress. Annual subscription of \$7.00 includes a quarterly news letter and record sheets. For further information please contact:-

Jennifer Southeron,
"Old Dromana",
Moree 2400
Phone 067 533 242

)Please take note birdwatchers)

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Outing Report of Mt. Colliery trip which was under the leadership of Ron and Nancy Gooding.

May 20th was out last outing date and 40 people attended under the leadership of Nancy and Ron Gooding. Morning Tea was enjoyed at the Gooding's home and then the group proceeded to Hurdle Creek and the site of the old Mt. Colliery Coal Mines. These are on the south eastern Darling Downs just to the east of Tannymorel.

Hurdle Creek has cut itself quite a gorge back into the higher country which forms more or less a plateau along the top of the Great Dividing Range. Looking from the east it forms "The Rim". This Plateau is the remains of quite an extensive lava flow which occurred in this area. While the flow is now quite eroded and no doubt much of it washed away, geologically speaking it is quite young being about the last geological occurrence in the area.

In the gorge the vegetation is very interesting having been originally rain forest or near rain forest. Against one black cliff face there are three very fine large fig trees, also Silky Oak, White Cedar and Hoop Pine etc. Because the area has been inhabited for some time a number of introduced species have become established, some of which we could do without.

South African Box Thorn (well named), Briar Rose, Cotton Bush (or New Zealand flax - the host of the Wanderer Butterfly), Pepperina and the Cruel Vine which looks like a choco plant. It is named the Cruel Vine because moths get their proboscis's caught in the flower and in the morning they are hanging there dead.

A very interesting but rather rough ~~walk~~ can be had by walking up-stream several kilometres to Hoffman's Falls. Here Hurdle Creek falls off the Plateau down into its gorge. A winding road goes up onto the higher country to the top of the falls. A good place for a picnic.

In places along the bottom of the gorge the creek has worn its way down to the original land surface and here the rock is sandstone with traces of coal and in one place a narrow coal seam has been exposed.

When the steam trains were extending over the Downs and there was a growing demand for coal, coal mines were opened up and several drives were dug into the hills following the coal seams. At first the coal was taken by dray to Tannymorel and loaded onto the trains probably by hand. Rail tracks were then laid and the trucks run down by gravity and dragged back by bullock team and then steam engines were put on to do this job. For awhile it was the second biggest coal mine in Q'ld employing over a 100 men and shipping around 200 tons a day. The mines closed about 1976 after operating for about 90 years. They are now full of water but unfortunately it is not suitable for irrigation. For awhile Mt. Colliery was a busy little town with coal mining, timber and farming. Quite a lot of timber was taken ~~by dray~~ off the high country. In one place there was a slide where the logs were pushed over the edge and slid down to the valley floor. There is a tale that some logs went over the edge before the bullock team could be unhitched.

Our thanks to Nancy and Ron for leading us on such a very enjoyable outing.

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NO OUTING ON JUNE 24th -

JUNE 27th monthly meeting in Q.C.W.A. Rooms - our Guest Speaker is Desley McDonagh - her subject is 'Memories of my trips ~~in~~ and around the Melbourne area'. All are welcome.

BIRDS IN THE ARCHER'S GARDEN - Every year when the fruit is ripening we have an invasion of Rainbow Lorikeets in the district and at breakfast time we see 100 or more feeding on the rock and feeding trays on our Patio. They are very noisy, quarrelsome birds and like to rule the roost much to the sorrow of our King Parrots; Crimson Rosellas; pigeons etc. Even our Wattle Birds are discouraged from drinking from their nectar bottle - the Lorikeets have the secret of drinking from it not one bird at a time but pairs drink together - now not one bottle has to be put out each day but two or sometimes three are the order of the day. I'm happy to see the Wattle birds come very early in the morning and again just on dusk to get their share of the nectar. Tom said that the invasion would be over once the fruit finished and the frosts came - that has happened but the noisy mob are still here.

BOTANICAL INTERNATIONAL DAY.by. Jean Harslett.

During the stroll up the valley on the Mount Colliery outing we saw some fine examples of truly Australian trees - the Hoop Pine - Silky Oak and a magnificent sample of a Moreton Bay Fig, with huge spreading buttresses - a powerful trunk and a far reaching canopy, the quality of which must have taken hundreds of years to achieve. We stood in solemn awe beneath this monarch of the scrub, the mind marvel-ling at its "guessed" age. Several kurrajong specimens, locally called "Pink Lace Trees" (Brachychiton discolor) were seen. This rainforest species, (also in adjacent hardwood forests) does justice to the Brachychiton family. The distinctive large broad lobed leaves are deciduous, and new leaves are preceded by the flowers.

Nancy Gooding who with her husband Ron led the party and steered us past two very distinctive and attractive trees, which were new to all, but one of the party. The fruit led to their identity (confirmed by Mr. David Hockings at the meeting). They were the Bell Fruit Tree (Codonocarpus attenuatus). Despite the quite wide distribution of this species it is not commonly seen. Bright orange berries were eye catching to us and the birds alike and were the Native Olive (Eleaodendron australe) and recently changed to Cassine australe. Scattered amongst the predominant deep greens of the hillside were splashes of yellow - like sunshine - and were the deciduous White Cedar (Melia azedarach var australasica)

Back at the Gooding home we were shown an old letter, obviously frequently referred to and written in 1959 (31 years ago) by a wonderful friend of Field Naturalists, Mrs Betty Mc.Kenzie. It was thanks on behalf of the Q.N.C. for a campout in the area, Betty was the secretary and Wally the Editor of the Magazine. Some of the plants of the area were identified by Mr. Selwyn Everest and he had expressed surprise at the variety of countries represented in introduced plant species found along the old coal mining valley. Prompted by this letter and the fact that we, too, saw so many introduced species (no doubt some which were not there in 1959) I decided to report this trip as a "Botanical International Day".

Three of the Asclepiadaceae family were present. The "Cruel Plant" or Rubber Vine" (Araujia hortorum). This vine with milky sap and the distinctive hanging fruit, large and flabby with thin walls and filled with seeds which are attached to fine long silky white hairs, when it explodes open. It is a native of Peru. It derives its common name from the habit of the flower "trapping" moths by the

proboscis, favouring them with an unpleasant end, hence the name of "Cruel Plant".

The second in the family also milky sapped is the "Wild Cotton", Wild Balloon Bush or "Bladder Cotton" in reference to its large bolls. It is also sometimes called the "Swan Plant or the "Duck Plant", because the stalk at the base of the fruit has a curved neck tapering to a beak-like tip. More formally, & to be sure we are talking about the same plant after all those venacular names is Asclepias fruticosa. Its a native of South Africa. It is also one of the many milky plants which is a food-plant to the rich orange & black Wanderer butterflies seen. Asclepias curassavice with conspicuous orange flowers comes from the West Indies.

The Purple Top, "Verbena bonariensis" comes from South America, while the more common Verbena has migrated from Europe through north Africa and Asia to Australia. This aromatic, bitter plant was used by the Druids of Gaul - the Ancient Romans.

There was Noogoora Burr from Central Asia, clovers which were deliberately imported from Europe and America. "Cobblers Pegs" Bidens pilosa, little 'biddies', bless their little hearts, ex. Europe. The Wild Passionfruit Passiflora sp. came from Brazil. The inhospitable African Thorn Bush is not welcome, while the more pleasing Bush Lemons though prickly too, are quite welcome.

The Stemless Thistle distinctive in green and white pattern and low habit comes from the Mediteranean region, while the commonly called "Scotch Thistle", (Onopordum acanthum, is found in Scotland, but is really quite rare, and contrary to common thought it is another species which is their national pride. The Pepperina Tree (Sclinus molle) a native of South America grows in a wide range of soils in Australia and did much to relieve the bareness and dustiness of many western towns, homes and sheep yards, because of its tenacity.

Brian Mc. Donagh saw ~~the~~ species of the Rubus family during the day and to it lay we can relate our Blackberries as well as the common honey bee.

Had we set off on the day complete with a notebook, and a determination to note all the introduced plants we passed and including some of the much smaller plants of weeds and grasses, the list could have been much greater, of species from other lands, mingling freely with Australian species.

Fancy spending a day with the Goodings and writing of plants instead of birds !!

Jean Harslett.