



THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST



**Monthly Newsletter of the
Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club**

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OFFICERS OF CLUB FOR 1990 - 91

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	Jean Harslett B.E.M.	833185
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Youth Officer	Robin McCosker	835371
Bushwalking Officer	Enrol Walker	812008
Librarian	Esme Colley	812927
Committee	Nominated Officials with Power to co opt	

Meetings: 4th Wednesday of each Month at Q.C.W.A. Rooms at 8pm.

Outings: The Sunday PRECEDING the 4th Wednesday of each Month.

Annual Subscriptions: Single \$8.00 Family \$15.00 per annum

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 and post to members.

ADDRESS CHECK

Could all members please check that their address is correct, and if not notify the secretary immediately.

COPY FOR NEWSLETTER

Could all contributors to the newsletter please have their copy in the hands of the editor by the second Sunday of the month if at all possible. Copy may be sent to P.O.Box 33, Severnlea 4352 or left with Sylvia Murphy at Chelsea House & Garden at the Stanthorpe Plaza.

February 1991

MINUTES OF THE STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB HELD IN THE C.W.A. ROOMS, 28/11/90

Present: 33 Analogies: 5

Opening: President Kris opened the meeting, welcomed all present, including Ted and Rosemary Goodwin, Betty Connolly as visitors, and welcomed back Mrs Joyce Smith.

Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting as printed in the magazine were accepted as a correct record on the motion of Val White, seconded by Ray Marsden and Carried.

Correspondence: Inward:

1. Queensland Nats - Newsletter
2. Toowoomba Nats - Darling Downs Naturalist.
3. Stanthorpe Border Post - account for covers for magazine.
4. A.C.F. - Invitation to buy tickets for Christmas Raffle.
5. Oxford University Press - The Dictionary of Environment and Planning.
6. Chinchilla Nats - Newsletter
7. Goodings - Sub for 1990-91.
8. Mrs. Foresto - enquiry about membership.
9. Queensland University - Brochures for Eco Tourism and a Seminar
The Global Classroom.

Correspondence: Outward

1. Letter of thanks for help at outing to The Gibsons at Cement Mills.
2. " " " " " " " " OIC Forestry Passchendale.
3. Thanks for meeting programme, and coming from Pittsworth -
The Walters at Pittsworth.
4. 4QS - Round the Ridges - notes for broadcasting.

Moved Desley McDonagh, seconded Dot Archer that the inward correspondence be received and the outward adopted. Carried.

Business from Correspondence: The Secretary will write a letter to Mrs Foresto and send a copy of the current magazine.

Treasurer's Report: Statement for 24th October 1990 to 28th November 1990.

Bank balance as at 24th October		546.19
<u>Receipts</u>		
Subscriptions	76.00	
Room Rent Collections	<u>10.69</u>	<u>86.69</u>
		632.88

Expenditure:

Room Rent	10.00	
Magazine Duplication	6.00	
Magazine Postage	26.00	
K. Carnell (Photocopy labels)	34.25	
Justice Dept. Application	54.50	
for Incorporation)	130.	<u>130.75</u>
Balance as of 28/11/90		\$502.13

The Report was moved for adoption and the accounts of Room Rent \$10.00; Magazine Duplication \$6.00 Magazine Postage \$25.00 and Border Post \$115.63 passed for payment by Julia Brown, seconded by Mrs James and Carried.

Outing Reports:

1. Dore McCosker gave a report on the half day outing to Mt Norman, and suggested that that area be considered for a full day outing next year.
2. Ray Marsden reported on the Camp Out at Severn Hills. This had been very successful 14 people camped and there were 27 adults and 4 children for the day on Sunday. Peter Hazelgrove and his family joined the outing on Sunday. Letters of appreciation are to go to Dr Taylor and Jason, and Mr Peter Hazelgrove expressing the member's appreciation of their assistance.

Coming Activities:

Break-up: December 9th at Claude and Mary Walters. President Kris will arrange for a barbeque. Directions are in the November Magazine.

January Outing: 20th January 1991 - details in November Magazine.

No Magazine December or January

February Outing: 21st to Killarney; Meeting 27th February 1991.

Gordon and Noor Davis will present the programme entitled "Around the World in 40 Minutes".

General Business:

Incorporation: The papers are waiting for the business to be completed. We (Kris Carnell) have done what has to be done.

Sun Safety Week Mrs Ailsa Wilkinson encouraged club members to wear a hat and protect themselves from sun cancer. One sunburn can turn a mole into a melanoma.

Programme:

Members and visitors enjoyed the programme about Russia which Tom Archer presented. We like to be arm-chair travellers' to places as unlike Australia as Russia. Thank you Tom! We look forward to the other half of our trip at a later date, and we are glad we live where we do.

Desley McDonagh
Hon. Secretary

OUTING TO SEVERN HILLS IN NOVEMBER

Leader: Ray Marsden

A small tent village sprang up on a grassy knoll overlooking the Severn River and commanding a superb view of the western side Sundown National Park, when 14 people in 7 tents took part in Stanthorpe Field Nats Camp out.

Getting to this superb camp spot was a challenge, as Jean had suggested we should have every now and again. I was pleased that everyone who wanted, was able to at least visit the camp even if they could not get their vehicles there to actually camp.

As the weather was very unsettled on the Friday evening, it was decided that the group of five who were going to set up camp on Friday, would camp 'in' at the Marsdens instead of camping out. Early on Saturday morning Fred Simpson joined the Marsden group of Lyle and Renie Thompson, Jenny Single and Millie and Ray, and we set off on the 49km trip to the campsite - leaving the appropriate NATS signs where doubt could creep in.

On the way we saw some very fine specimens of kangaroos and wallaroos, a family of young foxes playing on the road as we came through a wooded area. As we came closer to Severn Hills, several deer were seen grazing in the early morning coolness.

We were welcomed by the Taylors and proceeded to the campsite some 4ks from the homestead. Dr. Taylor said he would join us later. The position of the tent was decided by the availability of a safe campfire site, as the country was exceedingly dry. Dr Taylor (please call him Peter) said he had no objection to a campfire as he was confident we would observe all rules for safety. It was decided that one communal fire place would be constructed and that would be used only in the evening when it could be watched at all times.

As we were finishing erecting the three tents, Dr. Peter arrived, then Tom Archer, Errol and Annette Walker, Leila and Dore, and from Warwick Diana Holley and Eric Dale. After the completion of erecting the tent village we went down to the river, some with Peter and the others in Errol's and Leila's 4wd. Lyle was most interested in this campout as he had worked on Severn Hills for a couple of years in the late 1920's. He was able to tell Peter how the country looked in those days, and they had many a talk about this.

We were all very impressed with the roads Peter has had constructed throughout the property for ease of management and control of his free ranging deer population. Jason, Molly's grandson, was most helpful at all times and made the place come alive for us with his tales of the things he had observed while working on the property. He also had some long talks with Lyle.

More than half way down to the river, along very steep property roads we stopped fleetingly at 'The Hilton', The Severn Hills permanent campsite where Peter brings his guests to recharge their batteries after the grind of city life. We continued for a short distance by vehicle and then climbed the rest of the way to the river. Callisterons were still blooming and birdlife was quite good. The river was not running though. Most had a paddle and one brave soul had a swim, and many photographs were taken and notes compared before we began the ascent to the vehicles.

After lunch, the party walked about 100 metres to a vantage point from where the Nundubbermere Falls could be seen to the north, and a long stretch of the river as it made one of its many twists among the steep mountains. Atop this high cliff we could see many landmarks in the adjacent Sundown National Park and further afield to Girraween and Bald Rock. In the far distance other high points were identified. Surrounding iron barks had a most beautiful yellow-orange mistletoe in full bloom. As we lay in the shade of the trees, feasting our eyes on the marvellous views, Peter outlined his plans for the property and for the recently acquired property across the river, which he has to travel 70ks by road to reach. Lyle talked about the Severn Hills of the 20's and we learned a lot about this rugged countryside. We saw feral goats in several places and Peter said that the goats and pigs were a constant worry. We saw much evidence of pigs close to the campsite, and on Sunday morning the early awakeners saw goats trimming the shrubs less than 200metres from the camp. Ranger Peter Hazelgrove of Sundown National Park, who joined us for the Sunday walk said that the goats pose a great problem for the park as they compete for food in the habitat of the newly sighted group of rock wallabies in this remote section of the park.

Saturday night saw the whole group of 14 gathered around the campfire cooking the evening meal, staying on to talk about the day's activities while munching of freshly cooked damper and ~~consequently~~ enjoying the warm summer evening.

On Sunday morning we met at the homestead, after stopping en route to photograph orchids and a semi-friendly goanna, and were joined by those who could only come for the day outing, including newcomer Mavis Grayson from Killarney. The group now totalled just over 30 with the youngest only 5 weeks old. Congratulations to the Mum who carried the babe to the top of Mt. Emily - no mena feat.

On the way to the top of Mt. Emily, many stops were taken to examine the plant life and admire the views. From the top a most wonderful panorama was spread before us, and the landmarks in the top end of Sundown National Park were

pinpointed. We watched vehicles going down to Burroughs and also discerned more groups of those pesky feral goats in widely separated parts of the park.

Lunch was eaten under the shade trees at the homestead and from there all were taken in 4WD vehicles first to the campsite, to the lookout, and then down to the river. Most saw deer at some time during the weekend as well as other furry inhabitants of the area.

We were lucky enough to be able to stay on until the Monday and invited Molly Taylor, Jason and Peter and Therese Haselgrove and their boys to share the evening meal. Once again we enjoyed the friendship and learned more about the area and Sundown Park. Lyle and Jason shared experiences and all in all it was a most relaxing evening.

On Monday afternoon we broke camp and headed back to town, marvellously refreshed by our time in the bush and extremely grateful to Peter and Molly Taylor for their many kindnesses and for access to their property.

Millie Marsden

HALF DAY STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALISTS OUTING TO THE UNDERCLIFFE AREA

ON 20.1.91

Leader Jean Harslett

The first Field Nats. outing for 1991 was a half day "warm-up" and was particularly well attended with over 40 people present. The venue was Undercliffe Falls and an ideal place for family groups, some enjoying a short up-stream stroll and swimming, others the more challenging route to the bottom, and a few venturing up along the face to the top again.

Upon arrival dark storm clouds were building up, but they cleared quickly without dropping any rain. There were a few new faces - Mrs Forrester and son Daniel, Mr Fletcher, Mr & Mrs Thompson Jr. and others who are fairly new including Mr & Mrs Balle, and Mrs Gray and granddaughter. People were given the option to go their chosen ways, a few bird watching, others occupied the exercises already mentioned. The bird watchers enjoyed the antics of a Rufous Fantail displaying itself. A Carpet Snake or Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota variegata*) which is probably the most familiar of the pythons, was seen briefly by some members. Its habitat varies and it may be arboreal, terrestrial or rock inhabiting. It is largely nocturnal, but also is commonly encountered basking in the sun or foraging during the day. This one was indulging in peacefully basking in the sun on a rock close to the water. Perhaps surprised in its usually quiet surroundings, it appeared in its haste to depart, to temporarily lose its grip, and part of its length flipped over backwards into the water. It quickly regained control and made a fast but dignified departure for cover.

High up in one of the trees amongst slender foliage, something, at first bird-like was noticed. A closer look with field glasses revealed that it was an Eastern Water Dragon (*Physignathus lesuerii*). These are usually encountered on waterside rocks or overhanging branches. They are very wary and drop several metres into the water. The splash is the first indication they are there, and they can remain under water for quite a long time, up to an hour. The dominant males occupy a choice section of the stream with a small harem of females. Juvenile males avoid predation by adult males. Perhaps this was a very timid young male, since it was perched so high above the water.

Some members were attracted by an attractive small tree with shiny green leaves and clusters of bright yellow flowers. The common name of this tree is Water Gum, though closely related to Gum Trees, it is not a Eucalypt.

This was known as Tristania laurina. The three species of Tristania occurring in Queensland have recently been put into three different genera, Tristaniopsis, Lysicarpus and Lophostemon. A second species of the three to be found in Queensland the Brush Box (Tristania conferta) now Lophostemon confertus were seen on the high tops when we drove around to view the falls from the south-east side.. I note that the Water Gum habitat is given as Moreton and Wide Bay areas, which suggests these specimens are rather more west than usual.

When we crossed the Bookookoorara Creek above the falls, the waterworn 'Maryland' granite with its large orthoclase crystals was very obvious. Tom Archer pointed out that the fall gorge was part of the Demon Fault, in fact the northern extremity of it. Some members will recall a wonderful campout a few years ago on Demon Creek and the Demon Fault area east of Tenterfield, and the subsequent rugged nature of the landscape. At the fall area is a junction of Stanthorpe Adamellite, Undercliffe Falls Adamellite and Volcanic Sediments, creating, in time, the grandeur of the scene before us.

All gathered from their various points of exploration, for a cup of tea and a chat. Harry and Joan Stevenson produced a case of juicy home grown nectarines, which were very much enjoyed by all present, most refreshing.

Some then began to wend their way home, and Leila Hermansson who knows the area well showed us "The Spa", a small rock pool swirling with water and enjoyed by bathers. At the end of the afternoon she offered to guide a few who wished to drive up and see the view of the falls from the south-east and opposite bank, to join her. We also took a brief drive up on to the "Lindsay View" airstrip to enjoy the sweeping distant views, and we thank her for this spontaneous addition to the afternoon.

OUTING FOR 24th FEBRUARY

*PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF PROGRAMME

Acting on the advice of Mr Robert Stevens, of Killarney, who is assisting us in leading the outing to the Condamine Gorge and Head Road Area, the February Camp Out has been postponed, to be held on 23rd 24th March. Extremely heavy rain has fallen in the area and adjacent ranges causing flooding in many streams. The Condamine is too high to get up the gorge at present, and even small rises between now and then would make it difficult.

Colin Hockings and Errol Walker have kindly agreed to bring their planned outing forward to 24th February. This should prove a very interesting day.

Cars will depart from Weeroona Park at 9 a.m. and will drive straight to Dr Robert's Waterhole at Girraween National Park. We will walk to Dr Robert's Waterhole, then proceed downstream to Wyberba Falls above the cascades.

Shortly after Christmas Col and Janet Hockings noticed a large balancing rock which had fallen from its perch on the cliff edge, and is now lying in two pieces. As the rock fell it broke a piece about 2'6" thick and 20ft long, from the cliff edge. Col and Janet have before and after photographs similar to those of London Bridge at Pt. Campbell in Victoria.

If the weather is not too hot we have the option of walking through to the Underground River below Dr. Robert's Waterhole. There is a lot of undergrowth on this part of the walk, which Errol grades at 7 out of 10 on a difficulty scale, so most people may prefer to retrace their steps to the vehicles and drive 2km along the road, and walk from there to the Underground River. The walk to the cascades is graded at 5 out of 10.

"FRED"

We have a resident frog in the bathroom.

I should explain at the outset, that our cat door leads from the back patio into the bathroom, and we have been visited over the years by the occasional frog or lizard which have always been gently but firmly evicted and have never been a problem. However, towards the end of last summer we discovered a frog in the corner of the shower, and when it was evicted in the usual manner it reappeared the next day in the same place. This time it was taken further afield - two days later it was back in the same place in the shower, and we became interested in our lodger (now known as "Fred") and decided that as "he" was always consistent in his choice of resting place (almost at eye level in one particular corner of the shower) and was really doing no harm, he could stay as long as he wished.

We lived in harmony for several weeks as "Fred" would sleep happily in his corner of the shower by day, did not seem to object to sharing the shower if necessary and would go out of the cat door in the evening and feast on the moths that gathered on the back pation attracted by the kitchen light, returning to the bathroom by the morning.

Life became a little more interesting when "Fred" decided to vary his sleeping quarters, and there were some exciting moments when he leapt from the safety of a shower cap into an already occupied hot bath, or shot out from under the shower screen door on to the unsuspecting occupant of the shower. In time we came to know the likely resting places, so we learnt to conduct a mornin g "frog check" to establish the chosen site for the day, and ensure that he was not disturbed until we needed to bath or shower for ourselves, when he sometimes had to be moved for his own safety.

As the weather became colder "Fred" ceased to go out at night, but also did not seem to be making preparation for hibernation, so we decided he should join some others of his kind down by the dam some 300 metres away from the house and settle down for the winter with them. He was removed one Monday morning - and a week later was back in the bathroom! When I thought of the painful climb, uphill all the way and over some very rough and rocky terrain, that he must have had to get home, I did not have the heart to evict him again, and so he stayed in his favourite place for another fortnight until we had some rain, and I tried again, this time depositing him in some pinebark and leaf litter near the water tanks behind the house, and this time he did not reappear.

The bathroom seemed strangely empty without "Fred" and we often wondered what had happened to him. Then, a few days after the return of some warmer weather in September, wh should leap out of my shower cap one night, but "Fred" and we have once again resumed the pattern of last summer.



He disappeared for three weeks in mid-November, but reappeared on November 29th and has been in residence from that date until the time of writing, with only the occasional day's absence (or has he found another hiding place as yet unknown to us?)

We are having some difficulty in identifying our lodger. I at first thought he was a Lesueurs frog (*Litoria lesueuri*) which is quite commonly found in this area, as his most striking feature is his bright yellow thighs with black blotches but he does not seem to have the dark transverse bar between the eyes nor the characteristic black canthal streak that the books describe. We have noticed that his dorsal colour varies markedly - sometimes he is a uniform pale fawn in colour, and at other times he becomes dark brown and speckled, and the changes can take place quite rapidly, but what causes them we have not as yet been able to work out. However he has certainly stimulated our interest in frogs and we are hoping that he will continue in residence for some time, even if some of our visitors unfortunately do not always share our enthusiasm.

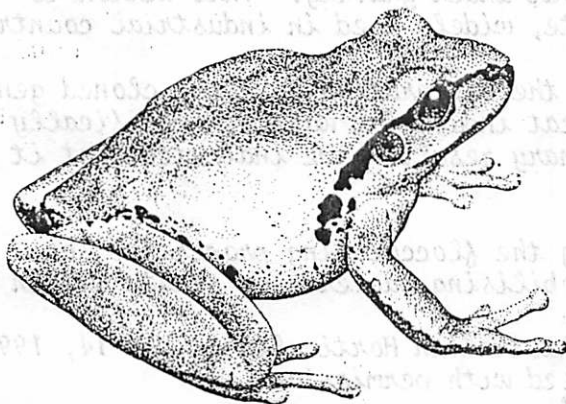
A. Ridge

LESUEUR'S FROG (*Litoria lesueuri*)

A composite species as currently recognised. Pale fawn to dark brown above, immaculate, or with a few scattered darker flecks, or with large, irregular dark brown patches covering the dorsal surface; specimens with the latter pattern almost invariably have a dark, transverse bar between the eyes. A narrow black canthal streak from the snout, without interruption to the eye, and continued behind the eye to a point on the flanks near the base of the forelimb; this stripe usually has a narrow pale border above, and does not enclose the pale-rimmed tympanum. Groin yellow, heavily blotched with black; hind side of the thigh with black and yellow reticulum. Many specimens are flushed all over with lemon-yellow, while in some juveniles the yellow in the groin and hind thighs is replaced by bright green or blue-green. Whitish below. Skin smooth or shagreened above smooth on the throat, granular on the belly. No dorso-lateral skin fold. Fingers free, without webbing; toes with well-developed webbing. A moderate inner and a minute outer metatarsal tubercle. Tympanum distinct. 70 mm.

Distribution: Coast, ranges and slopes of eastern Australia, from northern Qld to Vic.

Habit: A terrestrial, nocturnal frog found in a wide range of habitats from dry sclerophyll and coastal heathlands to rainforest. Often found long distances from water.



Lesueur's frog



MEETING PROGRAMME FOR FEBRUARY

Errol Walker will be presenting the programme for February as he will be unavailable in March, and Gordon & Noor Davis will bring us their programme then.

Errol will show slides of his nine weeks return trip to National Parks in the southern part of Western Australia, including Caves on the Nullabor, Kalbarri, Nembung or "The Pinnacles" and the southern Coast.

INCORPORATION

At long last the club is incorporated!! The first meeting of the management committee has been held. At the February meeting details will be supplied as to how the new system will work.

Kris Carnell

PLANT PURIFIES WATER

In the UK, Dr Geoff Folkard, a researcher at Leicester University, has an unusual and imaginative project. It is aimed at providing pure water by treating it with material from a plant that grows naturally and extensively in many developing countries.

His research has focused on using seeds from the tree *Moringa oleifera*, which grows in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of Asia, Africa and South America. It has turned out to be a multi-purpose plant with edible roots (with a flavour of horse radish), seeds, seed pods and young leaves.

The trees are remarkably fast-growing and able to produce flowers, fruit and seeds within 18 months of planting.

Cuttings are used to establish live boundary fences and provide fuel wood.

The British researchers have discovered that when mixed with river water the seeds give water-soluble proteins that are able to bind individual particles of material together forming what is known as a floc.

Bacteria and viruses become enmeshed in the floc and after a period of slow mixing all the suspended materials settle out under gravity. This action is similar to applications of aluminium sulfate, widely used in industrial countries.

Further research is planned including the exploration of using cloned genes from the plant to produce coagulants to treat industrial wastes, specifically the removal of noxious chemicals. Preliminary results have indicated that it would be a worth-while investigation.

There is also the possibility of using the flocculating properties for removal of bacteria from fermenters or immobilising bacteria on strata within bio-reactors.

"Australian Horticulture" Nov 14, 1990
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