

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.

Monthly Newsletter of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club.

No. 29

July 1972

P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe.

Officers and Committee

1971 1972.

President	Mr. W. Cathcart	Ph.812
Vice Presidents	Mrs.R. Harslett and Mr. T. Chapman	
Secretary	Mr. E. Walker	Ph.888
Treasurer	Miss J. Westcott	
Editors	Mr. D. Pfrunder and Mrs. D. Orr	Ph. Pozieres 219
Librarian	Mrs.R. Tremeeer	
Publicity Officer	Mr. F. Wilkinson	
Bushwalking Representative	Mr. R. McCosker	
Geology	Mr. P. Higgins	
Flora	Mr. B. Dodd	
Fauna	Mrs.Z. Newman	
Youth	Mr. G. Marsden	
Newsletter Sub-Committee	Mrs.B. Krautz and Mrs. W. Cathcart.	

Activities

Meetings	4th Wednesday of each month
	C.W.A. Rooms 8 p.m.
Field Outings	Sunday preceeding 4th Wednesday.

Annual Subscripion

Single \$1.50

Family \$2/00

Programme.Field Outings:

<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Leader</u>
North Branch Saturday Camp-out	22nd 0 23rd July	Mr. T. Chapman
Extra Outing - Tenterfield Area		
and Corard State Forest	6th August	Mr. P. Ingram
Harsletts' Area	20th August	Mr. J. Harslett.

Meetings:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker.</u>
Australian National Parks	26th July	Mr. T. Ryan
"Remember Last Year"	23rd August	Film Night.

Annual Meeting      Wednesday      26th July      C.W.A. Rooms 8 p.m. followed  
by General Meeting.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Minutes of General Meeting held 28th June 1972:

Twenty-nine members were present with twelve apologies being received.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: Moved Mr. R. McCosker, seconded Mr. I. Jackson

that the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed. Carried.

Inward Correspondence: (i) Newsletters from other Nats Clubs.

(ii) Press releases from D.P.I., Brisbane.

(iii) Letter from N.P.A. requesting that their Association may be included in the mailing list of our Club's magazine.

Outward Correspondence: (i) Letter to Mr. J. O'Dea thanking him for the use of his property "Kelvin Falls" for our campout weekend.

(ii) Letter to Adult Education Toowoomba with details of our May Outing and meeting.

Moved Mr. E. Walker, seconded Mrs. J. Harslett that the Inward Correspondence be received and the outward adopted. Carried.

<u>Treasurer's Report:</u>	Balance - May 24th	\$45.50	
	Expenditure	5.00	\$40.50
	Interest		1.50
	Receipts		4.00
			<u>\$46.00</u>

Moved Miss J. Westcott, seconded Mrs. A. Wilkinson, that the Treasurer's Report be received and Accounts passed for payment. Carried.

Business from Minutes: Mr. T. Ryan has advised that he should be available to lecture to our club on the 26th July.

Mr. John Harslett advised that the Lions Club has taken it upon themselves to sign-post tourist attractions on the Granite Belt and have offered to do the Mt. Norman Road also.

It was moved by Mrs. J. Harslett and seconded by Mr. T. Chapman that a working bee be arranged to carry out maintenance work on a bad section of the Mt. Norman Road. This working bee is to be included as an outing for the '72 - '73 club year.

General Business: Mr. E. Walker suggested that the club librarian maintain a complete collection of "The Granite Belt Naturalist". Seconded Mr. T. Chapman. Mr. T. Chapman also suggested that a list of missing copies be advertised in the next magazine.

The President commented that no nominations for committee and officers for the next year had been received and that certain members would be contacted in the near future.

A call was also made for original contributions to the Magazine.

Mr. J. Verri introduced his guest from New Zealand -

Mr. M. Webster.

Outings Reports: Mr. Bob Leisemann reported on the outing to Texas Caves at which approx. 80 persons attended.

Mr. T. Chapman gave a pre-outing report for the July outing which he has changed to North Branch instead of Spicer's Gap due to road conditions.

The meeting was closed at 8.40 p.m. when we were entertained by Mr. Brian Dodd who gave an illustrated lecture on Western Australia's Wildflowers.

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Did you know: Approx. 1/3 of the world's land area is forestland - 4,126 million hectares (1 hectare equals 2.47 acres). Of this 3.712 million hectares are actually covered with forest vegetation, this constitutes the world's forest area.

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.TEXAS CAVES. - Report of Outing:

On arrival at the park at 9.25 a.m., there were about a dozen cars waiting to leave for the Texas Caves including about half a dozen cars from Warwick led by Edgar McCullough. Within about five minutes the number practically doubled and quite a crowd of people had gathered. Just before we left in convoy at 9.30, a motorcycle policeman cruised around the corner from Victoria Street and showed a little surprise at the large gathering of people and cars. Altogether about 27 cars and 80 - 100 people went on the outing.

The road to the caves has been greatly improved in the last six months and was in good condition and a shower of rain the previous day had laid the dust a bit on the recently graded gravel sections. The only section to worry some members was in the last quarter mile near the caves where the road crossed the rocky bed of Pike Creek with steep banks to climb on either side.

On arrival at approx. 10.45 a.m. we were met by a member of the University of Queensland Speleological Society, who requested that we do not enter the Main Cave until after lunch as they were carrying out experiments and the large number of people would upset temperatures in the cave. They were also surprised by the large party of people as cars kept arriving for about ten minutes.

So we ventured to the Russenden Cave first and assisted by Edgar McCullough started showing people through. Some were a bit timid at first, but those who went down the cave were really impressed by the magnificent and unusual formations. Some were put off by the smell of the musty and stale air but it was an exceptionally good day in the cave and after a few minutes the smell was hardly noticeable.

Most people went down the main entrance and came up the same way, but some crawled through "The Squeeze" to the Shawl and up through the second entrance. By one O'clock most people had returned to the cars for lunch and I came up for air for the first time with the last of a few stragglers.

After a pleasant lunch in the warm sunshine everyone had a chance to wander through the Main Cave which does not have the spectacular formations of the Russenden Cave, but is still very interesting.

I then took a party of five to the Crystal Cave (it's too crowded with more than five at a time) which requires a slide on one's stomach for about 50 feet before reaching a spot with enough height to sit or stand. After four of these slides I had shown about twenty people through who would agree that it was really worthwhile.

Meanwhile quite a few people had returned to the Russenden Cave to take photographs and some who missed out before lunch went down. For anyone who had visited the Caves before they probably would have noticed quite a bit of damage done in the last six months.

On coming out of the Crystal Cave for the last time (thank goodness!) at about 4 o'clock most people had left for home after a most enjoyable and interesting day and only a few cars remained. After showing a couple of late-comers through the Russenden Cave we finally left for home at about 5 p.m.

BOB LEISEMANN

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REMEMBER:    A n n u a l   M e e t i n g   - Wednesday 26th July, 1972   C.W.A.  
                 Rooms at 8 p.m.

--oOo--

July 1972.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Club Camp-out and Outing:

On the night of Sat. 22nd July enthusiastic members will camp in the mountains north of Cunningham's Gap. Granted it will be cold, but I can promise a beautiful camp-side and a mammoth campfire.

There will be lots of walking and climbing for the energetic ones, a good bird area for the "Birdos" and plenty of scope for children of all ages from three months to ninety years. Furthermore I can guarantee that you will not hear a telephone or a semi-trailer, so if you want to get away for a peaceful and/or energetic weekend defy the cold and join us up the North Branch, but bring warm clothes, plenty of bedding and stacks of food for keen appetites. A powerful torch could be useful as we hope to see some nightlife, and if you wish to be an ice-breaker bring your bathers.

The main party will leave the park at 9 o'clock. Anyone coming later in the day or on Sunday will find the route marked from the North Branch turn off on the Cunningham's Gap Highway. The turn is to the left just before the Caltex and B.P. petrol bowzers and 55.5 miles from the Stanthorpe P.O. From the turn-off, it is 8.8 miles to the site, making a total mileage of 64.3 from Stanthorpe. The road is good - the last two miles being paddock tracks but not steep or rough, quite suitable for small cars or loaded trailers.

Permission to go into the area has been obtained from landholders and the Forestry Dept. Assurances have been given that we will not be taking guns or dogs, that we will close all gates that we open and that we will leave no litter.

Should the weather be at all doubtful or if you require any further information please contact me ( Stanthorpe 232 ) The road in could become un-trafficable after rain. It is quite a suitable area for a day outing if you wish to come for either Saturday or Sunday.

TOM CHAPMAN.

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Programme for Extra Outing to Tenterfield Area:

The outing to the Tenterfield area and Gerard State Forest which was postponed earlier in the year by rain will now be held on Sunday, 6th August.

Cars will depart Weeroona Park, Stanthorpe, at 9 a.m. for Tenterfield, where members will meet at the Park near the Tenterfield Swimming Pool. (Junction of New England and Mt. Lindesay Highways) at 9.45 a.m.

Leader for the outing will be Mr. Philip Ingram. This should prove a very interesting outing to an area new to many of us.

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A REQUEST FROM THE LIBRARIAN:

Following a suggestion at the last General Meeting, I have started sorting out a complete set of our monthly magazine "The Granite Belt Naturalist" since its first issue in December 1969.

A few of my copies have become somewhat tatty, so would members who would like to contribute the following issues please bring them along to the Annual General Meeting on July, 26th?

September '70, October '70, November '70.

March '71, June '71, July '71, August '71.

Thank you.

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F. TREMEER.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.'BRIEF ENCOUNTER'.

A new heaven and a new earth! Tier upon tier, height above height, the great wooded ranges go rolling away westward, til on the lofty skyline they are crowned with a gleam of snow white clouds.

Row after row runs down the slopes, twisting and curving its way across the valley, ending in a steep ascent on the far side. A sea of gold dappled with rusty red and burnt orange and occasionally a dash of irish green. Occasionally a four by four projects its end skywards, the splintering surface blending with the rustic leaves.

To the south the deep prussian blue picks out the gorges and valleys, lighting up in contrast the rocky outcrops and brown tree studded plains. The clouds rise high catching the last bars of the evening sun throwing on their mantle of cherryred, pink, golden, bronze and firey hues. A lone gum comes to life as a flight of "silvereyes" take to wing, darting, swooping down, up, silhouetted against the pale blue dome.

To the east trees in checker board sequence stand, - stiff, impressive, their fruits repeating the gold and red. Out to the west the mountains rise abruptly, casting their flanks in deep shadows, and trace their shape across the fields.

A breeze blowing up starts a 'fan dance' as each leaf waves and shimmers on its stalk.

A "whirly whirly" quickly moves, running across the slopes, up, down, gathering speed, leaves, dust, debris, caught up in its haste skudding along.

Then as the sun sets, the colours fade; the blue to deeper blue, the storm heads to grey-white, the gold to a dull unpolished bronze. Fermenting grapes reek the air. Tomorrow all will return, gather up the spectacle, then fade, but those hills, that scene, those colours; the Ballandean valley; a paradise painted and untouched...

ROSS ALLAN DAVID.

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NEWSLETTERS FROM OTHER CLUBS:

During the year we have exchanged magazines with the following clubs:

Chinchilla, Queensland, Richmond Valley, Toowoomba.

We also now receive The Queensland Hosteller - the quarterly magazine of the Youth Hostel Association. The Librarian has these publications, along with various press releases - and she would like members to know that they can be seen at the General Meetings or borrowed for reading at home.

A quick glance through revealed articles on pests of a lawn, Albino Frogmouth, Butterflies imbibing, Queensland's soils (Q.N.C.), The Echidna, Red winged Parrot, Grevillea species in my garden, Sturt's Desert Pea and Native Orchids (Toowoomba Nats) There are also reports of outings to many places and book reviews.

If you come across any interesting book relating to Natural History, please share it with other members by:-

(a) bringing it along to General Meetings and/or

(b) giving the Librarian the name, author and publisher and a few short notes saying what the book is about.

Thank you.

F. TREMEER.

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Plant Life of the Stanthorpe District, by Professor D.A. Herbert:

The contrast between the luxuriant tropical vine scrubs of the Johnstone River in North Queensland and the cool Eucalyptus forests of the Granite Belt is one of the remarkable features of the vegetation of Queensland. In these two places we have two of the great competing armies of plants that in past ages have surged backwards and forwards displacing one another as the climates have changed. With warmer and wetter conditions the vine scrub or rain forest overwhelms the gums. When the climate becomes drier the vine scrub fails, and the Eucalypts come in. The Stanthorpe district with its annual rainfall of thirty inches is an area where the rain forest can no longer compete, and the characteristic forest is Eucalyptus parkland.

In the McPherson Range, both types of forests grow side by side. The moister parts are covered with vine scrub; the eucalypts are in the drier parts - the very steep slopes (particularly those facing north), on the ridges and on the less retentative soils. In these mountains the elevation is comparable with that of Stanthorpe and many of the eucalypts and wild flowers are those of the Granite Belt.

Rainfall, temperature, soil and dry winds are the main factors in determining the native plants of Stanthorpe, and where the same conditions are present elsewhere there are outlying colonies of Stanthorpe plants. Naturally these patches are restricted areas in Queensland, but they extend far to the south, and there is a remarkable resemblance between the floras of the Granite Belt and of many southern localities as far south as Victoria. There is even a resemblance in the scent of the bush.

The local species of Eucalyptus form a link with the southern trees. They include the red stringybark, the New England peppermint, the Victorian apple, the candebark (which grows well up the slopes of Kosciusko), and yellow box. There is, too, the Sydney apple (*Angophora*) which is not a eucalypt, though related. Cypress pine (*Callitris calcarata*) grows as scattered trees or as groves of distinctive appearance.

Native Cherry: There is a curious tree that looks very like a Cypress Pine in colour and general growth. It is the Native Cherry, a plant belonging to the Sandalwood family. In the early days of settlement it was regarded as an example of the strange growths that are found in Australia. It has a hard little fruit sitting on top of an edible ball of juicy flesh when it is ripe, and was thought to have a fruit with the seed on the outside.

This is not very curious as there are plenty of plants in which the fruit looks like a seed, while its stalk is edible; the cashew nut is one of them. What is remarkable is that the native cherry is parasitic on other plants, fastening on their roots with its white suckers and absorbing their water and food materials. It is so indiscriminate in the choice of victims that it may even attack its own roots.

Mistletoes are common on branches and are parasitic in the same way, but they are more obviously predatory than the native cherry. The hanging mistletoe, the species with leaves like those of a gum tree, is so vigorous in its robbery that the far end of the attacked branch dies, often leaving the parasite on the end of the limb.

Curious Orchid: A curious orchid grows in the Stanthorpe district. It is Gabola, a climber with chocolate-brown stems ascending trees and clinging to their trunks by means of adventitious roots. It has no leaves, and it gets its food material from decaying leaves in the soil through the agency of a scavenging fungus with which it lives in partnership. The trusses of yellow or brown flowers come out in spring and are quite handsome, but it is almost impossible to transplant the species to the garden because the fungus partner



THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Plant Life of the Stanthorpe District Cont.

dies when disturbed, and without it the orchid is doomed.

There is another orchid of somewhat similar habits that flowers mainly in mid-summer and is often very common indeed, even along roadsides. This is Dipodium, with beautiful spotted purple flowers on erect stems one to two feet high. Its stem is underground, and it has no leaves. All that is seen is the flower spray; it dies down after a few weeks, and then for another year there is no sign of the orchid above ground. Perhaps it may be several years between flowering periods, and it has been known to flower profusely in paddocks where it has never been seen before. Like Gabola it depends for food on a fungus partner. It may be that there are other orchids that flower underground and are never seen. Two such species have been discovered in Australia; one of them in New South Wales growing with Dipodium, so there is a chance that it occurs in Stanthorpe.

The majority of the Granite Belt orchids, though generally in partnership with fungi, do not rely on them to the same extent, and are probably independent of them except in the very early stages of their growth. These are ground orchids, amongst the most beautiful of the local wildflowers though smaller than the exotics of the glasshouses. They include the yellow or white donkey orchids (Diuris), the sun orchids (Thelymitra), the greenhoods (Pterostylis) pink fingers (Caladenia) and many others that are found right round Australia. They are at their best in Spring. Some of them such as greenhoods have tongues that flick when they are disturbed by insects. This is an aid in pollination, the visitor being thrown up against the pollen and carrying it to the next flower.

The Trigger Plant: The most conspicuous movement amongst the local flowers is that of Stylidium, the trigger plant. This grass-leaved plant has sprays of pink flowers a foot or more high in summer. A pin poked into the centre of the flower sets off the trigger, which swings down swiftly. An alighting insect gets a quick dab of pollen in a spot where the next trigger that hits it will pick it up. Stylidium is not an orchid though like orchids it has a curious type of flower and an ingenious method of pollination.

Stanthorpe, being an area where the peculiarly Australian type of vegetation is developed, it is not surprising that for the most part its plants are similar to those of the other States and visitors to Tasmania or Western Australia find themselves amongst wild-flowers and trees familiar in their own districts.

The beautiful cylinders of banksia flowers are visited by birds and the strong texture of their petals enables them to survive the vigorous probing of the bills of the birds as they feed on the nectar. There may be anything up to eight or nine hundred flowers on one of these banksia spikes, but it is a strange fact that only a few of them, perhaps not more than a dozen, set seed.

The banksia overdoes its flowering, and cannot possibly set every flower because there is no room for that number of seed capsules on the spike. Smaller relatives of the banksia, the grevilleas, with flowers like cats claws, are very beautiful and are often grown in gardens.

Another member of the same family is Lomatia, the so-called fly-killer. It is generally believed that bunches of these white flowers in a room cause flies to drop dead, but experiments have not borne out the belief. Lomatia is a shrub about three feet high, very common in the district and flowering in summer.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Plant Life of the Stanthorpe District Cont:

The Baronias: Amongst the most popular of the wild flowers are the baronias, though there are none with the same perfume as the Western Australian brown baronia. The attraction of our species lies in their beautiful pink flowers and their lasting qualities when they are picked.

Eriostemon and Crowea are equally attractive, and so like the baronias that most people think they are the same. Baronia is improved by pruning or careful picking, which encourages good flower stems in the following year. Bush fires often have the same effect, though they are a rather drastic treatment.

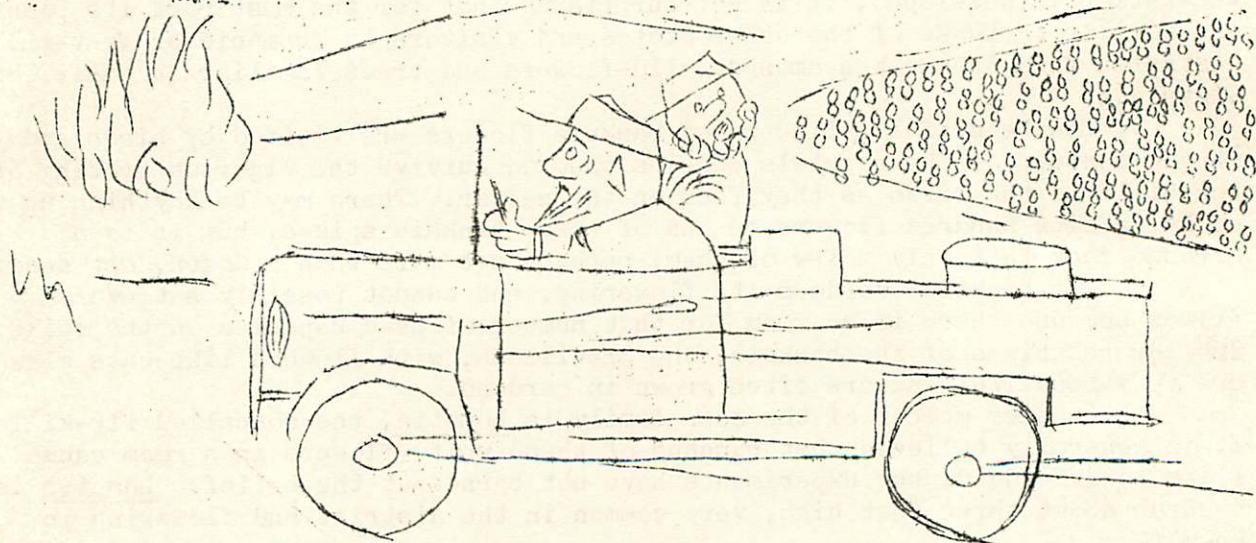
It may be noticed sometimes that there is a slender stringy vine making a tangled mass over the boronia and similar wild flowers. Closer inspection shows that it has no leaves and that it has numerous suckers penetrating the plants over which it sprawls. This is Cassytha, the native dodder. Bush fires keep it in check to some extent, and in fire-protected places the parasite may sometimes be thoroughly out of hand. It climbs over anything, even young eucalypts and banksias.

Flowering Trees: Amongst the small flowering trees there are three types worthy of special mention - wattles, teatrees and bottle brushes. Some southern wattles such as the Cootamundra are grown in gardens, but the beautiful local species are obviously suited to the climate and worthy of cultivation.

Tea Trees are mostly white-flowered, and the local species include that which was originally used as an infusion by Captain Cook for the prevention of scurvy amongst his sailors. It was because of this use that the name tea tree came to be applied. The bottle brushes or Callistemons, famous for their brilliant scarlet spikes of flower, are most popular garden plants not only in Australia but overseas.

These are but a few of the beautiful or curious plants in the Granite Belt. Their interest to Queenslanders is all the greater because so many of the species are rarities in the warmer parts of the State.

Courtesy "Stanthorpe Border Post".



Saay, Dad. how fast CAN bees fly?