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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST



Monthly Newsletter of the
Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club

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 it to members.

Meetings: 4th Wednesday of each Month at QCWA Rooms at 8.00pm.
Outings: The Sunday preceding the 4th Wednesday of each Month.
Subscriptions: Single \$8.00 Family \$15.00 per annum July to June.
Rent : Donation per family per meeting.
Address: Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club Inc., P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe Q 4380.

CLUB OFFICE BEARERS 1996/97

President :	Kris Carnell	076 835 268
Vice-Presidents :	Rob McCosker	076 835 371
	Lincoln McPhee	076 811 651
Secretary :	Liz Bourne	076 836 374
Treasurer :	Roger Logan	076 812 493
Newsletter Editor :	Desley McDonagh	076 813 074
Magazine Committee :	Julie Beddow & Wendy Donges	
Publicity Officer :	Patience James	076 811 853
Librarian :	Trish McCosker	076 835 371
Management Committee :	President, Vice- Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer.	

ADDRESS CORRECTION NOTICE

Please check your address and advise of any change needed.

COMING UP

1. NEXT MEETING will be held on Wednesday, August 26th at the CWA Rooms, Victoria Street, Stanthorpe at 8.00 pm. This is the Annual meeting and you are asked to bring something for supper and slides and prints from the outings over the past year. 1996 - Junction; Inverell campout; Donnely's Castle; Christmas at Kennas - 1997 - Walk down Quatpot/Kettle Swamp Creek; Waterfall Creek Falls; Boonoo Boonoo Campout; ~~Wilson's Peak~~; Racecourse Creek Peaks; June Campout Corindi Beach; Basket Swamp; Doctor's Creek Falls & the bluff.

MT. MATHIESON - SPICER'S GAP

2. AUGUST OUTING - Sunday 24th August - Boonoo Boonoo CBD - Leader Helen Hartmann. NOTE BBQ FOR LUNCH! BRING FOOD TO COOK! Further details inside.

PLEASE NOTE

1. DEADLINE DATE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER - Tuesday September 9th.
2. Please remember that, when the club is travelling as a convoy, (particularly in unfamiliar territory), each driver is expected to make sure that the next car is in sight.

SCALE OF DIFFICULTY FOR WALKS ON NATS OUTINGS

1. Flat walking, road or track.
2. Road or track, gentle hills.
3. Track, some hilly sections.
4. Track, some steep sections.
5. Cross country, easy open forest, gentle slopes.
6. Track, steep section common, with steps.
7. Cross country, some hills, some thick undergrowth.
8. Cross country, steep section with scrambles over rocks etc., some thick undergrowth.
9. Cross country, steep, hilly, rough, thick undergrowth.
10. Mountain climbing, hard going, higher level of fitness or plenty of time required.

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY ROCK WALLABIES?

The Department of Environment is seeking information on the location of the vulnerable Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*). Formerly widespread throughout the mountainous country of eastern Australia, this threatened animal is now found only on a few isolated cliffs and outcrops. Numbers are critically low in Victoria and southern and western New South Wales. Populations have survived better in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. In our area, there is a small colony in the Nundubbermere Falls area of Sundown National Park.

Brush-tailed rock-wallabies inhabit cliff faces, rocky outcrops and large boulder piles, which provide caves, cracks and ledges that shelter them from adverse weather and predators. Colonies of about five or more occur where there is adequate shelter with suitable grasses and herbs nearby. It is thought threats from feral animals, particularly foxes and goats, are to blame for the wallabies' decline.

They can be identified by their chocolate-brown back and flanks with a reddish brown tinge on the rump; thick, dark brown-black untapered tail and similarly coloured feet; brownish-yellow belly; mottled grey shoulders with dark stripes behind the elbows and a white cheek stripe with a dark stripe running from between the eyes to behind the ears.

Have you seen any? The Department is distributing a brochure and questionnaire and would like any feedback on sightings or knowledge about where these wallabies might be located. I have copies of the brochure/questionnaire if anyone wants one.

Liz Bourne
Ph 83 6374

WANTED

*information on the
whereabouts of the
brush-tailed rock-wallaby.*

Fears are held for the safety of this threatened animal. If you have ever seen a brush-tailed rock-wallaby, please contact the Department of Environment or your local National Parks office.



PRE-OUTING REPORT TO THE BOONOO BOONOO GOLDFIELDS - 24/08/97

including some historical information on the area.

After leaving Weeroona Park at 9.00 am (led by Rob McCosker), the company will reassemble. at the Boonoo Boonoo turnoff on the Mt Lindsay road. Here, we will be in the heart of the Boonoo Boonoo CBD - or would have been had we arrived a century earlier. The Post Office was just to the west of the turnoff, the hotel just to the north of the spot where we will stop. (Some of the slabs from the hotel have been incorporated in the Bald Rock Cafe dining area.)

We will then proceed to 'Currawong', the property of Mr & Mrs Geoff Robertson, where the billy (water only) will be boiling. Mr Robertson, who will guide us on our walks, has a long standing interest in the flora, fauna and history of Boonoo Boonoo. He has experimented, with great success, in attracting bird life by planting local grevillea species, as well as other plants. I saw large numbers of wrens and tomtits and veritable clouds of firetails. Smaller numbers of these, and other small birds, are to be seen in the surrounding bush, depending on the weather. The creek has a stable platypus population- although the Nats in full cry are unlikely to see them. After morning tea we will walk south along Dismal Swamp Creek and back to the cars via Specimen Gully (ferns) and the site of the Boonoo Boonoo Cemetery. From C.1890 - 1910 the area along the creek was the main village with about 14 families. Many remains of houses (fireplaces) and diggings are still visible and topaz, tourmaline, smoky and clear quartz and traces of gold are still found. The first recorded burial (though perhaps not in the cemetery) was 1869 and the last early this century.

Lunch will be at the cars where there will be a BBQ fire and plate operating, which I hope people will share with me.

After lunch, we will walk north along Dismal Swamp Creek and east along another gully where there is evidence of blasting.

The planned excursion is a very gentle affair with almost level walking, some of it along tracks. The afternoon walk is more cross country, but there is little undergrowth and no steep grades. The parking spot is quite sheltered should anyone not wish to walk - and you can look after the fire.

The more energetic are welcome to make longer excursions if they wish.

NOTES:

1. There is a creek crossing en route to our lunch spot. It is not difficult and only about 100 metres from creek to lunch spot so it would be a simple matter to ferry across anyone who did not wish to drive.
2. The discoverer of tin in Stanthorpe is said to have been a Boonoo Boonoo goldminer.
3. Mr Robertson has a most interesting collection of photographs taken on the B.B. diggings. These will be available to anyone who may be interested to look at them.
4. I will have, for the guidance of hopeful prospectors, a mining map of the area. It dates probably from late last century and is the mud map to end all mud maps.
5. THERE IS NOTHING UNNATURAL ABOUT GOLD - JUST OWNING LARGE QUANTITIES.

Helen Hartmann (067) 361423 (evening is best.)

ANSWERS TO QUIZ QUESTIONS FROM THE JUNE MEETING AND IN THE JULY NEWSLETTER.

1. 'Rosella' is a corruption of 'Rose Hiller' named for Rose Hill farm where the parrots were first seen.
2. Platypus, echidna. 3. Integrifolia, Collina, Robur etc.

1. Eucalypt. 2. Sea gulls *(7) dotterel (3) Terns (18)
3. Scarlet, white-eared, white plumed. (54)

1. Jabiru. 2. Pubifolia (Wyberba), Adunca (Wallangarra).
3. Falcons (6); eagles (2); owls (8) etc.

1. Quoll. 2. Laughing & bluewinged 3. Azure, collared or mangrove, sacred (7).

1. Currajong. 2. Pied, grey (4). 3. Murray cod, yellow belly, silver perch etc.

1. Cootamundra. 2. Pied, sooty. 3. Kangaroo, wallaby, wallaroo etc. etc.

1. Angophora. 2. Cassowary, Emu. 3. Owls (8) frogmouths (3) etc.

1. Jacana, Jesus bird (walks on water) 2. Possum, koala etc. 3. Fox, cat, goat, dingo etc. etc.

1. Pelican 2. Happy wanderer, false sarsparilla 3. Magpie, Currawong, white winged chough etc.

1. Western Taipan. 2. Sparrows, starlings etc. 3. Sundown, Girraween, Bald Rock.

1. Quokka. 2. Fox, wolf etc. 3. Brown, Grizzly, Polar etc. (Not pandas - they belong to the racoon family.)

1. Kiwi. 2. Splendid, superb (9). 3. Silver eye, currawong, parrots etc.

Queensland - Cooktown orchid; New South Wales - Waratah; Victoria - Heath; South Australia - Sturt Desert Pea; Tasmania - Eucalypt; Northern Territory - Desert Rose (Native Hibiscus); Western Australia - Kangaroo Paw; Australian Capital Territory - Bluebell.

* Numbers in brackets refer to the number of those birds listed in Reader's Digest Photographic Field Guide - Birds of Australia.

(P.S. - the editor did remember!!)

MINUTES OF MEETING OF STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.
held in Uniting Church Hall, High Street, Stanthorpe on 23 July, 1997

Opening: Vice President, Rob McCosker, opened the meeting at 8.15pm and welcomed members and visitors, Vern and Kath Sullivan.

Attendance: There were 20 people present and 13 apologies as per the attendance book.

Minutes of the previous meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 25th June, 1997 were amended in respect that the photos of the Wellington Rock outing displayed at the meeting were taken by Rod Hutchin, not Desley McDonagh. The amended minutes were then received as a correct record on the motion of Patience James, seconded by Neil Donges. Carried.

Correspondence:

Inwards:

1. Gillian Boucher, Publicity Officer, Granite Belt Choir - advising of their production of "Quaker Girl" from 11 - 13 September
2. Department of Consumer Affairs - annual return from club
3. Toowoomba Field Naturalists Club - *Darling Downs Naturalist* - June '97
4. Queensland Naturalists Club - *QNC News* - July/August
5. Chinchilla Field Naturalists - *Urimbirra* - June '97
6. Queensland Naturalists Club - *Queensland Naturalist* - June '97
7. Matrix Office Systems - invoice for \$50 for photocopying charges
8. Information Australia - publications for sale
9. Toowoomba Field Naturalists - *Darling Downs Naturalist* - July '97
10. Chinchilla Field Naturalists - *Urimbirra* - July '97
11. Doris Spence, Mr & Mrs Clarke, Mr & Mrs Adriaansen, Jack Deutscher, Mr & Mrs Power, John & Sue Kenna, Peter Langdon, Diane & Alan Jones, Patience & Frank James, L. Hermansson - membership renewals
12. Dept of Environment - poster and pamphlets regarding local sightings of brush-tailed rock wallabies

Outwards:

1. Notice of June meeting and outing to *Round the Ridges* and *Community Billboard*
2. Response to Australian Naturalist Expedition Society

This correspondence was received on the motion of Nola Dodd, seconded by Rod Hutchin. Carried.

Financial Statement for the period 25/6/97 to 23/7/97

Balance as at 25/6/97			\$734.35
Receipts:	Room rent collection	\$ 6.50	
	Photocopying	<u>\$ 1.00</u>	
		<u>\$ 7.50</u>	<u>\$741.85</u>
Expenditure:	Room rent (June)	\$12.50	
	Magazine postage (June)	\$34.90	
	Extension cord for slide projector	<u>\$13.95</u>	<u>(61.35)</u>

Balance as at 23/7/97 is 680.50

Accounts for payment:

Petty cash - secretary	\$10.00
Magazine postage (July)	\$35.40
Room rent	\$12.50
Matrix Office Systems (P/copy charges)	\$50.00

The financial statement was adopted on the motion of Roger Logan, seconded by Desley McDonagh. Carried.

Outing Report:

Brian McDonagh reported on his trip to Doctor's Creek Falls at Lyra on 20 July. Although the falls were dry and there were not many wildflowers out, the 18 people who attended had an enjoyable day.

Next Outing:

This will be led by Helen Hartman on 24 August and will be to the site of the goldfields at Boonoo Boonoo.

Next Meeting:

This will be the Annual General Meeting and members are requested to bring slides that they have taken on trips during the previous year.

Specimens:

1. Roger Logan had the body of an antechinus (possibly brown or yellow-footed). Joan Bourne will take it to the Queensland Museum for identification.
2. Desley McDonagh had photos from various outings.
3. Joan Bourne had some interesting rock samples and a fossilised shell collected during a recent trip along the Canning Stock Route in Western Australia.

Program:

Brian and Nola Dodd gave a presentation on a trip they did through northwestern Western Australia.

A Cautionary Tale About a Local Plant that May Cause Problems

The June 1997 issue of *The Queensland Naturalist* contains an interesting article by John Hunter from the Department of Botany, University of New England, concerning an account of severe blistering resulting from contact with a plant in Bald Rock National Park.

The plant in question was *Parsonsia straminea*, commonly known as monkey rope, which is a widespread species found in sclerophyll forests and rainforests along the east coast of Queensland and New South Wales. Hunter describes it as a woody climbing vine with adventitious roots, twining stems and leaves that are variable in size, particularly the shade leaves. In Volume 1 of Keith Williams' book *Native Plants of Queensland*, the author reports it as growing in open, sunny places or forests and frequently seen on old tree stumps and dead trees in remnant forest. He says the foliage of juvenile plants is dark green, the veins are lighter in colour and the underside is usually a dull purple. His book also has a good picture of the plant.

John Hunter came across this plant while surveying the granitic outcrops between Bald Rock and South Bald Rock and a dark orange latex was seen exuding from the cut surface of a plant. This was considered unusual as *Parsonsia* latex is usually clear and colourless. All those in Hunter's party whose exposed skin came into direct contact with this latex, later experienced severe blistering which lasted for two weeks after exposure and the scarring remained for over two months.

Subsequent studies of the plants indicated that those with colourless latex caused no problems, it was only the orange latex that seemed to cause the blistering.

So, if you come across this plant in the bush or on your property, be cautious in handling it, especially if you observe any unusual orange latex.

REPORT ON OUTING TO DOCTOR'S CREEK FALLS

On a perfect winter's day, except for NO RAIN, 20 Nats gathered to attack the falls and the Bluff. The falls were somewhat dry - no water running at all, but we did see some excellent rock formations. The Doctor's Creek gorge is really most spectacular, much more so if we had struggled up the bed of the gorge itself, but in view of the fitness of the leader (and some of the rest of us. Editor), we took the easy option. - quite good walking except for the undergrowth.

An interesting fact about the gorge is that a small side gully is actually the base level, while the main creek tumbles down into it - when it has water in it.

A fairly easy slope let us up to the top of the hill- easy by Girraween standards. The first part of the climb had been burnt in the hazard- reduction burns last year so the scrambling was fairly easy. The top of the hill was different - with dense undergrowth, much of it *Boronia*.

Lunch on top of the mountain - took us some time to find a suitable rock for us all to sit on. Good views in most directions - west to Jibbenbar, while to the South East the front pyramid was encrusted with human bodies - like a rock in the sea covered with barnacles.

All the trees in the Doctor's Creek valley are covered by the creeper *Marsdenia*, which has large deep green leaves, which causes the water course to be very obvious.

After lunch - spent by some people with cameras, binoculars etc.- we returned to the cars. Understatement of the century - we slid about 1000 feet, mostly on our bottoms. The dense layer of dead leaves, bone dry, made the footing very slippery.

Those who came on the outing will understand why I gave no estimate on the 1 -10 scale of walking - it would have put the more timid of us off. (Editor's comment - some of us who did the previous climb up there last year came back for more (although we knew what it was like) because it is such a spectacular place and we all survived. Many thanks to those who helped where and when needed and for the leader who obeyed whenever his sister (me) yelled out SLOW DOWN BRIAN!)

However, Helen has a nice easy outing next.

A few wildflowers were starting to bloom - *Acacia adunca*; *acacia ulicifolia*; *olearia ramosissima*; *Mirbelia speciosa*(couple of good patches); *Choretrum candollei*; *Boronia amabilis*. Also a *boronia* which was either a sick specimen of *amabilis* or could have been *B. graniticia* - although I don't know of a *graniticia* within 20 miles of here. 2 species of *leucopogon*. *Stenanthemum* - just starting to flower, but in bloom along the creek; *Eucalyptus caleyi*; *hardenbergia violacea* and *H. retusa*; *Brachychome* sp.; *dodena*; *bracteantha bracteata*.

Few birds were seen - lyrebirds heard and plenty of evidence of their feeding. Several unidentified honeyeaters; eastern spinebill; scarlet robin.

We really should go to this area in summer for the wildflowers, but of course, the last time we did this we were chased down the mountain in double quick time by a storm even though we identified over 80 wildflowers.

Brian McDonagh.

TRAVELLERS' TALES - STANTHORPE TO ATHERTON

The first month of our long service has gone and we've seen so much and we're enjoying every minute of it. We left Stanthorpe on the 9th July and after overnighthing at a nil star caravan park at Moonie we arrived at Miles. The Historical Village is excellent and well worth the visit. The next day we drove via Injune to Mt Moffatt N. P. It's 160 km from Injune and 120 km is rough dirt with the added danger of timber trucks. The pamphlet said the road is suitable for cars but I certainly wouldn't recommend it. Mt Moffatt was very dry and so different from the Carnarvon Gorge N.P. next door. There is about 90 km of roads inside the park and we explored all except about 15 km. The country changes so much from the stunted iron barks with cycads to the mahogany forest. Lots of sandstone formations and some excellent aboriginal art especially at Kenniff's Cave. There were only 6 other campers in the whole of the park while we were there - lovely.

Next stop was Carnarvon Gorge and what a contrast - people everywhere. We did the walk to the Art Gallery and back with the side tracks like all the tourists do but the highlight was a walk to the lodge and back along the creek. There were birds everywhere once we got about a kilometre from the camp ground and the influence of currawongs. Then about half way along we were lucky enough to come across a platypus feeding and we watched for at least half an hour. Carnarvon Gorge N.P. is in danger of being loved to death and with the upgrading of the road the situation will only get worse.

Our next stop was Springsure. From Rolleston to Springsure there were thousands of hectares of dry grass about a metre high with hardly any stock. We had read that the museum was worth a look but unfortunately it's been neglected. However we took a trip to Mt Zamia N.P. and that was worthwhile. It was again very dry but obviously would be a mass of wildflowers in good seasons.

The country from Springsure to Emerald seems to get worse as you go then out of nowhere is the Fairbairn Dam. We stayed at the Sunrover Resort - washed some clothes and restocked the food box. As you come into Emerald from the dam all of a sudden the country changes and there is the 2PH citrus orchard. It has 5 km frontage on one side of the road and at least 2 km on the other and I haven't a clue how far back the orchard goes - it's huge. Emerald has a very good Botanical Gardens. It's about 6 ha of established gardens and the new plantings will extend it to about 36 ha. A lot of the new planting is natives.

Charters Towers was next on our stopping list and it's a good day's drive from Emerald in our vehicle. A lot of single lane bitumen which is OK until you meet a 3 trailer road train. The country if anything is poorer with lots of stunted trees, termite mounds and very little grass. We had planned to stay 3 days at Charters Towers but ended up staying 5. There's so much to see with the

old buildings in the town. We went to Red Falls N.P. where you can see where the lava flow stopped as it was flowing down a creek. There is sandstone on one bank, black basalt on the other and the red lava flow in the creek bed. At Big Bend on the Burdekin R we saw fossilized coral and millions of tons of sand and at the Dalrymple N.P. we saw some very old graves. It's the site of the oldest surveyed town in North Queensland.

When we planned this trip one of the places we had to go was Undara. The arrangement there was quite different from any other National Park we've been to. Access to the park is very restricted and only Savannah Guides are allowed to take groups into the park. Having seen how it works I think it's probably a good way to manage the park considering the number of visitors - about 70,000 per year. It's relatively expensive to stay at the Undara Lodge Camping ground but the facilities are very good. All the accomodation is on private land. We took the full day trip and it's well worth the money. It's very hard to comprehend the magnitude of the tubes but it's an unforgettable experience to stand in a tunnel 400 metres from the entrance and know that the tunnel is 2 trains wide, 2 trains high and could go for another 30 km. We had an excellent guide, an aborigine who had grown up with the Collins children, the former owner of the National Park. We were amused at their granite outcrops and how much they raved over them.

Chillagoe on the other hand, was a complete contrast. We were lucky enough to stay at a park where the owner was very happy to share his local knowledge and we got to go on a tag-a-long tour of the marble mines. The waste is incredible, thousands of tons of marble just lying around. A lot of visitors now seem to stay in Chillagoe just for a day either going or coming from the gulf. We did the guided tour of the caves, visited Nungana N.P., and walked around the smelter site. It's a fascinating place and a lot closer to the Tableland than I thought.

We're now camped on the shores of Tinaroo Dam at a forestry camping ground. The weather is perfect and there's only about 10 camp sites in a hectare of land. All mowed grass, a perfect view of the lake and only 4 other campsites in use. I could get used to this lifestyle.

Kris Carnell.

This arrived today (11th August) with a covering note - Dear Desley,

Hope you can read my writing - enclosed is for the newsletter. We're having a great time. I'll probably send another one before we come home. Signed Kris.

Thanks, Kris and Margaret - you should have enough slides and information for many, many Nats programs when you come home !
Editor.