

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.RARE PARROTS:

The Paradise Parrot, Psephotus Pulcherrimus, described by many including the great English ornithologist, John Gould, as probably the most beautiful parrot known to mankind is, unfortunately, also one of the rarest parrots on earth, if it is not already extinct.

Gould described and named this parrot in 1845 from specimens collected by his able assistant, John Gilbert, on the Darling Downs.

The Paradise Parrot was known by various names, beautiful ground Parrot, Ant Hill Parrot and Soldier Parrot being a few of them. The male was a magnificent spectacle in colours of green, red, blue, brown and black and his beautifully erect form gave rise to the name, Soldier Parrot. The female was a duller edition of the male as is common with many of the parrot family. Nesting habits were unusual in that it mainly nested in termite mounds, a tunnel being drilled in the side of the mound which led into a hollowed out nesting cavity in the centre of the mound. Five white eggs were the usual clutch. They have been reported also to nest in the banks of creeks after the style of some kingfishers. Distribution of this parrot is difficult to define. Apparently it was on the Darling Downs and in the Brisbane and Burnett areas and has been reported from the Inverell and Casino districts. John Gilbert also recorded meeting numbers of Paradise Parrots in the Mitchell River area of the Gulf of Carpentaria on an expedition in 1844.

It has been suggested by Forshaw in his book on Australian Parrots published in 1969 that Gilbert may have mistaken the Golden Shouldered Parrot for Paradise Parrots as the Golden Shouldered Parrot is of the same family as the Paradise. There would be certain similarities between the two birds particularly in size and carriage and, to a certain extent, colouring but John Gilbert was, undoubtedly, one of the most competent ornithologists ever to visit this country and it is difficult to see him making a wrong identification in this case. It would seem that in some places from 1844 onwards the Paradise Parrot was in fair numbers, but it seems to have declined rapidly since the start of this century.

It seemed to gradually disappear from what were once its old haunts and it became so rare that in 1918 Mr. A.H. Chisholm started a newspaper campaign to see if this beautiful parrot was still in existence. After five years his quest was finally rewarded and a Mr. C.H. Jerrard from the Burnett district reported the discovery of a breeding pair of Paradise Parrots which he had been able to photograph at the nest. This is probably the last authentic photographic record of Paradise Parrots ever taken. Chisholm visited the area himself and in company with Mr. Jerrard was able to see these beautiful birds, a fitting reward for his long search. Since then there have been isolated reports coming in from various districts of possible sightings but to date investigations of these reports have been fruitless.

Today all we have to show that this beautiful parrot ever existed are museum specimens in the various capital cities of Australia. Perhaps one day Psephotus Pulcherrimus will again reappear to delight bird lovers throughout the world.

The Night Parrot, Geopsittacus Occidentalis, is an Australian Parrot about which very little is known. We do not know if it is extinct or not as there have been no definite recordings of it this century. As its name suggests it is nocturnal and during the day remains hidden in

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.RARE PARROTS Cont.:

tunnels in spinifex grass etc.. It has shown a close affinity with the spinifex grass and has been known also as the Spinifex Parrot because of this preference for the country containing spinifex. Though it is, undoubtedly, a very rare parrot indeed, hope is still held that it may eventually be rediscovered. The very nature of the bird, remaining stationery and hidden during the daylight, combined with its range, which is the arid centre of Australia, make it more than normally difficult to find. The many thousands of square miles where it could still exist attract very few people and possibly a big percentage of these people would not be interested in birds anyway.

It nested usually among tufts of spinifex grass, a nesting cavity being made in the centre of the grass which was entered by a long tunnel.

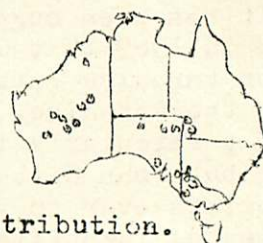
One search for the bird in Central Australia by Mr. F. Lawson Whitlock was nearly successful as in Larapinta Land he found the distinctive black barred green feathers of a Night Parrot which had recently been eaten by blacks. The blacks knew this parrot as "Myrrlumbing" which was supposed to be the sound the birds whistling note resembled.

Paradise Parrot. Blackish brown

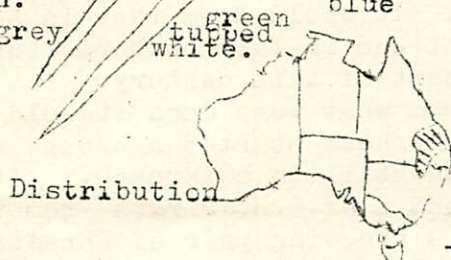
BILL BARKER.

Female
red
red
pale blue
Underwings blue. Bill greyish. legs - grey brown.
tipped white.
green
male.
Buff yellow with orange/brown
black
red
emerald green
red
red
turquoise blue
earth brown

Night Parrot



Distribution.



Distribution

yellowish
green mottled with dark brown
bill horn.
Underwing pale green.
dark brown
barred with yellow and green
legs brown
rich yellow



Did you know: The world's largest earthworms are to be found in some of the higher rainfall areas in Australia? These zoological curiosities are as thick as a man's thumb, and can be stretched to 10 ft. in length. They live in rich loam in river valleys and can be located by curious gurgling sounds; and in self defence they squirt an unpleasant liquid from pores on the surface of their bodies. Giant worms were thought to be confined to Gippsland, but David Fleay found one three feet long in South Qld. and it stretched to 4½ ft. in length. I believe that another one of equal size was located in rich soil near Kyogle.

---oOo---

D. WISEMAN

While on the subject of size, an American, who was a guest of an Australian station was being shown round the property. His host pointed out some fine draught horses. The American thought theirs were sturdier - their hogs fatter, American sheep grew better fleeces & so on. Suddenly a mob of kangaroos crossed the track. "Whatever are those beasts?!!" Answered the Aussie "Oh, those are grasshoppers."

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Collecting Flowering Plants, Ferns etc.:

1. A botanical specimen should be small enough to fit on a sheet of stiff paper or light cardboard 16 x 10 ins. (this is how it is finally mounted).
2. If the plant is very small collect the whole plant including roots. (this, of course, may only be done if it is very plentiful and unprotected). Rare plants should not be removed from places where they are likely to enjoy permanent sanctuary.
3. Of larger plants and trees - choose representative portion which will usually be leaves, buds, flowers and if possible fruits or seed vessels. The latter usually have to be collected at a different time and should be displayed together, but have a separate date label. With trees a sample of the bark is also often useful in identification. With Eucalypts and Acacias for instance, juvenile or sucker leaves often differ from the mature one - collect mature leaves - junior ones may be added for interest.
4. Carry a plastic box or bag to keep specimens fresh. Good photographs of larger plants often help for records and identification also. This is where only small portions can be pressed.
5. Each specimen requires a label. This is most important. It can be any size (but the standard size is 3 x 2 ins.) This should state:
 - a. Botanical name (when you have it - but space left anyway)
 - b. Common name.
 - c. Order or family
 - d. Remarks.
 - e. Locality it was collected.
 - f. Date of Collection.
 - g. Name of collector.

With reference to (d) "Remarks", this could contain anything not likely to be seen in specimen, e.g. the colour of the flowers, the scent; height and girth of tree; type of soil; aspect etc., altitude etc.. This should be done immediately - that is an interim label - the stem of the specimen may pass through it to keep them together. Pencil will do as it won't run with any plant dampness. The final label should be in ink, preferably Indian Ink, and be something like this, each specimen having a number for future reference:

No.124. Eucalyptus Mellidora.A.Cunn.
 "Yellow Box"
 MYRTACEAE.
 Tree Med.height, graceful, pendulous
 branches. Bark - scaly - flaky -
 branches smooth.
 Flat near Amiens (2,800 ft.).
 Date : 12.1.1973.
 Collector: Joan Harslett.

A second method is this -
 placed at the bottom right
 hand side of the card on
 which the specimen is
 mounted:

Name.....
 Common name....
 Family.....
 Notes.....
 Date.....
 Collector.....

Pressing and Drying:

Specimens should be pressed and dried as soon as possible. They should be pressed in unglazed paper (newspaper or similar or blotting paper), with several sheets between each specimen to assist in taking up moisture. Under a book, in a press of stiff cardboard, or preferably a

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Collecting Flowering Plants, Ferns Etc.Cont.

press of galvanized lattice wire to allow air to circulate. The more moisture in the specimens the more paper required. (Very rapid drying if needed can be achieved by placing specimens in tissue paper sandwiched between cottonwool - not recommended unless speed needed).

Papers should be changed once a week. The quicker the drying process the better the preservation of colour.

When dry mount on cartridge paper and sprinkle naphthaline flakes between the sheets to keep insects out. Specimens should be inspected occasionally for mould and kept in a dry place.

JEAN HARSLETT.

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Extract from Small Country Paper in N.S.W. written 55 years ago.
CAN NATURE BE INDECENT?

At a meeting of the Boree Shire Council, Inspector Rowe reported concerning what he described as an indecent rock, known as Mary's Rock, on the Forbes Road near Eugowra. The Official stated that the rock was an exact representation of a female in the nude and it was not a nice thing for the women of that locality, and he had received complaints about it.

Cr. Noble, "I have not received complaints".

Cr. Anderson, "when this appears in the papers there is sure to be a bulldog rush to see it!" (Laughter).

The Inspector declared that such an indecent rock formation should be blown up with a charge of dynamite. The Councillors, however, did not agree to this. They considered it a natural work of art and it was not desirable to destroy it.

(Ex.Tenterfield Star Oct.1968).

--oOo--

LOST & FOUND: Mrs.D.McCosker collected a bottle of peanut oil by mistake after the Christmas Bar-B-Q. Owner can redeem same by contacting Mrs.McCosker.

--oOo--

A word picture of a landscape at sunset as seen through the eyes of a poet:

we have to wait till the sunset comes
For shades that feel like the beat of drums
Sugar-gum boles flushed to peach-blow pink;
Blue-gums, tall at the clearing's brink;
Ivory pillars, their smooth fine slope
Dappled with delicate heliotrope;
Grey of the twisted mulga-roots;
Golden-bronze of the budding shoots;
Tints of the lichens that cling and spread,
Nile-green, primrose, and palest red..
Sheen of the bronze-wing, blue of the crane;
Fawn and pearl of the lyrebird's train;
Cream of the plover; grey of the dove....

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.

Monthly Newsletter of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club.

No. 35

February 1973

P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe.

Officers and Committee 1972 - 1973.

President	Mrs. R. Harslett	Ph. Amiens 5U.
Vice President	Mr. W. Cathcart and Mr. F. Wilkinson	
Secretary	Mr. E. Walker	Ph. 888.
Treasurer	Mrs. R. Leisemann	Cwth. Bank Bus. Hours.
Editors	Mr. I. Jackson and Mrs. D. Orr.	
Newsletter Sub-Committee	Mrs. B. Krautz and Mrs. W. Cathcart.	
Librarian	Mrs. R. Tremeer.	
Publicity Officer		
Bushwalking Officer	Mr. R. McCosker	
Geology	Mr. P. Higgins	
Flora	Mrs. W. McCosker	
Fauna	Miss J. Westcott	
Youth	Mr. G. Marsden.	

Activities.

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

Annual Subscriptions.

Single \$1.50	Family \$2.00
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Programme.Field Outings:

<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Leader</u>
The Signpost	25th February	Mrs. J. Harslett
Red Rock Gorge - Camp-out	24th-25th March	Mr. W. Cathcart
Boorook	22nd April	Mr. B. Leisemann

Meetings:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Birds	28th February	
Adventures with Malcolm Wilson	28th March	Mr. C. Cameron
	25th April	Malcolm Wilson.

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N.B.: From time to time the Editor is asked where someone should send or leave material for the Newsletter. It is suggested all correspondence for the Newsletter should be sent to Mrs. D. Orr, Box 300, Stanthorpe.

or Bring your material to the meetings or outings and pass it on to Mrs. Orr or Mr. Jackson. All material for the Newsletter should be in the hands of either person before the first weekend of the month. No matter how small your contributions may be, please send them in!

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Minutes of General Meeting held 24th January, 1973.

Thirty two members were present with apologies being received from 8.

The President welcomed the guest speaker and visitors. Sympathy on behalf of the club was extended to the relatives of the late Mrs.P.Higgins and Mrs.'Lal' Hayne.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: Moved Mr.W.Cathcart, seconded Mr.I.Jackson that the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted as written in the Newsletter. Carried.

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

(ii) Press releases and conservation information from the D.P.I.

(iii) Letter from Mr.E.J.Thompson requesting information on Stanthorpe's scenic areas.

(iv) Letter from Mr. & Mrs.T.Chapman with acknowledgement of their life membership.

(v) Letters from the Rural Fires Board advising of Mr.Burke's lecture for this evening.

Outward Correspondence: (i) Letter to Toowoomba Field Nats giving them our P.O. Box number for future correspondence.

(ii) Letter to Adult Education detailing our January outing and meeting.

(iii) A request to Mr.L.Cockburn seeking a lecture from him in February.

Moved Mrs.Z.Newman, seconded Mrs.D.Wiseman that the inward correspondence be recieved and the outward adopted. Carried.

Treasurer's Report: Cr.Bal. \$25.16

Subs. 11.00

\$35.16

Secretaries Exs. 3.72

Duplicating 1.50

Rental P.O.Box 5.00 10.22

Credit Balance \$25.94

Moved G.Leisemann, seconded I.Jackson that the Treasurer's report be accepted and accounts passed for payment. Carried.

Outings Reports: The Christmas Bar-B-Q was again a success, thanks to the McCosker families. Mr.R.McCosker called for suggestions for future Bar-B-Q's.

The outing to Rocky River, led by Mr.P.Ingram attracted 31 people who enjoyed a day with spasmodic showers.

General Business: Mr.Lance Cockburn has advised that he will not be available to lecture next month but should be available in May.

Mrs.R.Tremeer told the club of their family's move to Bundaberg in the near future.

The President thanked them for their services to the club in so many ways and called for a volunteer for the position of Librarian which will be vacant after Mrs.Tremeer's resignation.

Mrs.Z.Newman volunteered and was accepted by the Club.

The Meeting closed at 8.30 p.m. and was followed by a lecture and films from Inspector R.Bourke from the Rural Fires Board.

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Just a thought: To succeed in life be like a publisher... keep on correcting proofs until you do not have any mistakes left.

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.FIRE!

Fire is one of mans' most useful tools, yet if used incorrectly this tool could do more damage than any of our natural or man made disasters.

At our last meeting Mr. Bob. Burke from the Rural Fires Board presented us with a very lively and informative talk on the subject of fire and the functions of the fire board.

The prevention of outbreaks of wildfire and the fighting of fires which inevitably do occur is the aim of the board.

The Rural Fire Board Act does not seek to prevent or prohibit the use of fire. Its aim is to ensure that there should be brought to that use a reasonable degree of control to prevent damage to the life and property, both of the person burning and to his neighbours.

Mr. Burke stressed that there are no free fire seasons. At all times a permit must be obtained before burning off.

Consent of his neighbours and application to the fire warden, either by writing, telephone or orally, for a permit is necessary before the burnoff is commenced.

A Fire Warden may issue a permit even if one or more neighbours object or fail to give consent to the burnoff, but these people should be given notice by the permittee that the fire is to be lit.

A neighbour is an occupier of adjoining land which lies so near as to touch in some part of that land.

Provided that lands shall be deemed to be adjoining where they are separated by a watercourse, road or firebreak, unless that watercourse, road or firebreak is of not less than one half of one chain in breadth and is clean of all inflammable vegetation for the distance of one half of one chain in every direction.

The only fires which do not require a permit is a billy or camp fire. Before lighting such a fire a space of six feet around the site of the fire must be cleared of all inflammable vegetation while the fire is burning. The fire must not be temporarily or permanently left unless it is completely extinguished.

The fire board act does not control fires in proper incinerators which prevent the escape of fire. A 44 gallon drum without a lid or similar container is not an incinerator!

It is an offence to allow any fire to escape into another property and the person lighting any fire is responsible for any damage caused by the fire.

Once a landowner becomes aware of a fire which is illegal on his land he must take all possible steps to extinguish the fire and must, as soon as practicable report the existence and locality of the fire to the nearest Fire Warden, Forest Officer or Policeman.

No proceedings under The Rural Fires Act prevent a person seeking compensation at Civil Law for damages incurred through the "wilful, Reckless or negligent" use of fire. A person holding a permit and observing its conditions cannot however be held to be "wilful, reckless or negligent": It is a criminal offence deliberately to use fire to injure another person or his property - max. penalty \$1,000 fine or imprisonment with hard labour for five years. Penalties for breaches of all sections except those covering deliberate lighting are up to \$200, plus up to 6 months imprisonment. All penalties are doubled during a state of fire emergency.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.OUTINGS.Christmas Bar-B-Q.

The Christmas Bar-B-Q was held at "The Junction" property of Mr. & Mrs. Bill McCosker. Most members and guests arrived in mid afternoon and walked down to the rock flats where they enjoyed swimming, sliding down the rapids, sunbaking or viewing and studying the scenery.

At sunset we made our way back to the cars where the hot plate had been set up for us. Sincere thanks go to the McCosker family for the prior preparations and making available their private "natureland".

Our President welcomed the many members and visitors present at the Campfire led by Mr. W. Cathcart and his Troupe. We were pleased to have Tom and Mrs. Chapman and Tom Ryan and his family with us.

Although many of us did not bring our best singing voices, everyone enjoyed the various songs and skits.

Our thanks go to those who helped in any way to make our Bar-B-Q so successful.

Ed.

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Field Outing to Rocky River.

On Sunday, 21st January, 31 people set out for Rocky River.

The route taken was from Stanthorpe to Tenterfield on the New England Highway, then in a south-easterly direction to Billirimba which is at the bottom of the range.

The party had lunch on the banks of Demon Creek, a beautiful sandy and fast flowing stream.

After lunch we travelled a further 3 miles on the Upper Rocky River Road to a very nice spot beside the River where some of the party had a swim.

There were 3 quite heavy showers of rain that sent us to the cars for cover, but only lasted a few minutes.

The distance of the return trip back to Stanthorpe was 120 miles.

PHILIP INGRAM.

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Field Outing for 25th February.

The Field Outing for the Club planned for 25th Feb. is to an area on the Northern side of the National Park and less known than some of the other parts of the park.

The day will be planned with some variety to cater for all tastes. It is hoped to have a pleasant picnic area near a running stream with several short walks nearby to interesting parts.

Another planned walk, of a more energetic kind, is to investigate an interesting rocky hill of 3,600 ft. (a little higher than the pyramids) the major rock formation - this group is known as "The Signpost".

Care will have to be taken on the formation as it has associated with it a story of tragedy. Many years ago a member of a surveying party who stayed in camp for the weekend, for the purpose of exploring the area, had the misfortune to slip from the "Signpost" and lost his life.

If it can be arranged (depending whether the owners are in residence) a visit will be paid, enroute, to the site of the proposed new lodge. Members, I'm sure would be interested in this project in which the architects of the project plan it to be built encompassing all the principles of a National Park and in keeping with the surroundings. Lunch will be near the cars. Assemble at Weeroona Park by 9.15am. Depart 9.30am.

J. HARSLETT.