

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.

Monthly Newsletter of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club.

No. 37

April 1973

P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe.

Officers and Committee 1972 - 1973.

President	Mrs. R. Harslett	Ph. Amiens	5U.
Vice Presidents	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. Z. Newman		
Publicity Officer	Mr. F. Wilkinson		
Bushwalking "	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
Outings	C.W.A. Rooms 8 p.m. 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>
Backrock	15th April*	Mr. B. Leisemann
Castle Rock	20th May	Mr. R. McCosker.

Meetings:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker.</u>
Adventures with Malcolm Wilson	11th April*	Mr. M. Wilson.
Brookvale Park	23rd May	Mr. L. Cockburn
Photographing Wildflowers	29th June *	Mr. M. Hodge.

*PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGES FOR THE ABOVE MEETINGS!!

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Did you know: Fossils are traces of animals or plants which have been naturally preserved in various ways, sometimes for millions of years? Our knowledge of the Earth's history, its animals and plants, their evolution, its great climatic changes and the building and erosion of its fold mountain ranges, has largely come from fossils. Certain fossils are characteristic of particular geological periods, so we can say how old they are and how long their group survived. Some groups of animals and plants appeared and died out within a short space of time. Others (e.g. turtles) have remained unchanged through millions of years.

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April, 1973.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.Minutes of General Meeting held 28th March, 1973.

Thirty nine members were present with apologies being received from eight.
Minutes of previous meeting: Moved Mrs.R.Marsden, seconded Mrs.McDonald that
 the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted as written in Newsletter.

Carried.

The President welcomed the guest speaker, Mr.C.Cameron and his wife. Best
 wishes for a speedy recovery were expressed to Mrs.D.McCosker and a farewell
 extended to Mr. and Mrs. P. Duncan.

Inward Correspondence: (i) Quotes for manufacture of Club Badges.
 (ii) Letter from Adult Education re reimbursement for
 guest speaker.
 (iii) Press releases from D.P.I.
 (iv) Newsletters from other Nats.Clubs.
 (v) Letter from Lake Pedder Action Committee.

Outward Correspondence: (i) Advertising "copy" to Adult Education, Toowoomba.

Treasurer's Report: Cr.Bal. \$32.71
 Subs. 4.00

\$36.71

Postage Dec., July, Aug. 4.21

Duplicating P.Power 1.50

Postage June '72. 1.59 7.30

Cr.Bal. \$29.41

Moved Mrs.G.Leisemann, seconded Mrs.M.Sweet that the Treasurer's

Report be accepted and accounts passed for payment. Carried.

Cuttings Reports: Mr.G.Marsden reported on the camp-out to Red Rock Gorge which
 30 attended. A letter of appreciation is to be sent to Mr.J.Walsh,
 the owner of the Gorge.

Mr.B.Leisemann outlined the "Boorook" outing which will now depart at
 8.45 a.m.

General Business: The secretary revealed that a Club Badge will cost \$1.75
 each for the first 75 badges and signatures were taken to see how many
 were required for the members present. 33 badges were signed for and
 the list will be kept for further meetings until 75 badges are required
 The Librarian requested an August '72 copy of the Granite Belt Natural-
 ist to keep the Library issues up to date.

A new stapler is required by the Newsletter Sub-Committee. This was
 approved after a motion by Mr.W.Cathcart and seconded by Mrs.F.Wilkin-
 son.

\$12 was donated by Club members to be sent to the Lake Pedder Action
 Committee in response to a plea from this committee.

The meeting was closed at 8.45 p.m. after which Mr.C.Cameron lectured on "Birds"
 The lecture was illustrated with colour slides.

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'Tis past! no more the Summer blooms! Ascending in the rear,
 Behold congenial Autumn comes, the Sabbath of the year!
 What time your holy whispers breathe,
 The pensive evening shade beneath,
 And twilight consecrates the floods; while Nature strips her garment gay,
 And wears the vesture of decay,
 O let me wander through the sounding woods!

--oOo--

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.CONSERVATION: by Bill Barker:

I read in the paper recently where the American symbol, the Bald Eagle, was in danger of extinction as there are now only 700 breeding pairs. The reasons given for its threatened demise listed, amongst other things, loss of environment.

How many of us give a thought to this most important aspect of conservation?

A trip across the Downs is a very enjoyable experience with the different patterns of planted and fallow or ploughed fields, but how much more enjoyable if more trees had been left or some planted in various places. Is it any wonder that many tree living birds find existence in these places difficult?

On a recent trip I was particularly interested in the number, notably magpies, who had resorted to telephone poles or power poles for a nesting site. In some cases they had to use wire to build a nest. How much more vulnerable are the young in these situations. A tree gives some protection against predators and in the case of growing trees the great benefit of shade during hot days.

With the continual advance of civilization we are faced with the constant denuding of areas of all vegetation to make way for new suburbs. The birds are pushed further away to the outskirts of the areas as their living areas disappear. When a swamp is reclaimed by drainage and then possibly used to build houses on or even farmed, how much thought is given to the bird population which normally would inhabit such a place, the water birds, honey-eaters and so on who now have to try to find another home?

Just as in humanity we have displaced people who have to try to find refuge in another country, we have the birds who have to shift territory. Territory is very important to many birds and they resent any intrusion on what they consider theirs. I can imagine the difficulty many birds would face having to muscle in on another's territory once having lost their own!

Once country is cleared birds also lose a big source of their food supply, insects, wild fruits etc. all disappear before the bulldozer. Is it any wonder that they develop a taste for cultivated fruits and grains? I doubt if birds give much thought to who really owns a patch of grapes or a field of corn.

We cannot afford to be too complacent even when a species of bird seems to be in large numbers. Our own gorgeous Eastern Rosella is commonly shot as an orchard pest. One sympathises with the orchardist, but one also remembers that the Carolina Parrot, the only parrot of North America, is now extinct and one main reason for its extinction being ceaseless slaughter because it was a farm pest, this despite the fact that it was once so numerous even Aviculturists did not bother to keep and breed it, considering it far too common!

Do you ever notice how much more bird life there is along a water course or around a dam where there are plenty of growing trees and vegetation?

It would be a great boost to bird conservation if the preservation of a belt of bush, say even a ¼ mile wide was to be enforced by law along all permanent water courses. The bush in its natural state has all the variety needed for a bird population. There is room for the ground living birds, the low bushy undergrowth is the haven of wrens, many species of honey eaters etc., half grown trees would be favoured by whistlers, wattle birds and so on and the full grown trees also have their complement of high feeding honeyeaters, the larger birds such as magpies and hawks and lorikeets amongst the blossom.

It has all been worked out by a Master Hand and when man interferes he certainly tips the scales in a manner he little realises.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.

Outing on 15th April - 8.45 a.m.:

Assemble no later than 8.40 a.m. at Weeroona Park to leave at 8.45 a.m. sharp!

We will proceed to Tenterfield where we'll stop at the Park for 5 mins. to enable any Tenterfield members to join with us. From there we'll travel along the Casino Road approx. 17 miles east from Tenterfield. Here the cars will be left.

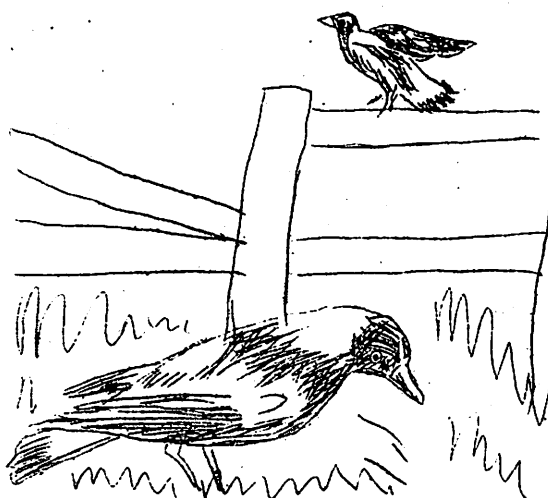
Good walking shoes will be needed and don't forget we'll have to carry lunch. We'll be following a crystal clear stream most of the way so there'll be plenty of drinking water available. Bring you billy for lunch.

The target for the day is a 200 ft. waterfall about 2½ miles from the cars. For the not so energetic there are plenty of places to stop and rest on the way. The walk is equivalent to the walk to Red Rock Gorge.

If it's a nice warm day, bring your togs!

R.LEISEMANN.

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BLACK-BACKED MAGPIE: *Gymnorhina tibicen*. Found throughout Australia generally, and has been introduced to New Zealand. Colouring varies in different regions. Prefers open country with cleared paddocks, picks up insects, lizards and other small game from the grass, uses trees for perching and nesting. Its flutelike carolling is one of the joys of the bush. They tame easily and soon learn to come down to food placed out for them. Individuals remain in the same locality throughout the year. The birds are generally quite popular, but some are nuisances at nesting time, often swooping and attacking humans who venture within their territory.

The nest is deep, bowl shaped made of twigs and sticks and sometimes built of scraps of wire; placed in the fork of a tree from 20' to 60' above ground. In areas devoid of trees they will use fences, telegraph poles and even have been known to build on the ground. In some areas of Australia their habit of using poles has caused some trouble to officials and they have provided receptacles known as 'Magpie maternity-homes'. Usually four eggs are laid coloured greenish-blue to bluish-white to dull brown with numerous streaks of chestnut brown. Breeding season Aug. to Dec. Birds grow to a length of 15 to 16 inches. The magpie is described aptly in these few lines from a famous poet:

The magpie's mood is never surly,
Every morning waking early,
He gargles music in his throat,
the liquid squabble of his note.
Then swooping down self-confidently
From the fence-post or the tree,
He swaggers in pied feather coat,
And slips the fat worms down his throat.

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.The True Story of the Real Smokey Bear:

It happened some years ago in the Lincoln National Forest, New Mexico U.S.A. It was a hot day and a small brown bear wandered away from its mother over the brown grass and the sticks and pine needles which snapped under his feet.

How the fire started no one really knows. Perhaps a careless smoker dropped a match or a thoughtless picnicker failed to extinguish his camp fire. perhaps a farmer was burning off his dry grass without taking the necessary precautions; but whatever the cause, in the hot, dry, windy conditions, the flame soon grew into a roaring forest fire.

The Forestry lookout reported the fire and men and equipment were rushed to the scene. They hurriedly established firelines only to see the fire, swept by the wind, leap across into other parts of the forest.

Birds and animals panicked and some were so confused that they ran into the fire; some ran from it and were not fast enough to get away; some tried to hide in hollows and among rocks, but in vain.

More men and equipment were rushed in and amongst them was a party of twenty-four soldiers from Fort Bliss in Texas. They were establishing a fire-line when high winds blew the fire across and they were trapped. The soldiers were experienced fire-fighters and they retreated to a rocky area, lay down and covered their heads with wet cloths. They were there for nearly an hour in heat so intense that their clothing at times caught fire, but miracously, all survived. Looking around, the only other living thing they could see was a badly burnt bear cub clinging, terrified, to a charred tree limb.

They gently took him down and carried him through the burnt-out forest which had once been his home, passing burnt and disfigured trees which would never again offer cool shade to the wild life. There was no grass left to feed the animals and protect the soil from the erosion which wind and rain would bring. The fish lay on the surface of the waters choked with debris and wood ash and dead animals not so lucky as the little bear cub littered the black forest floor. No longer was the forest a place to live or play in.

Forest Rangers and veterinarians from the New Mexico Game and Fish Department tended the little bear's wounds and burns. They fed him baby food and looked after him until one day he was fully restored to health. It was here that he received his name SMOKEY. The name stuck and since his home was destroyed, he was flown across the country to Washington D.C. He had become pretty well known by now and a large crowd of people, reporters and photographers were at the airport to welcome him. Someone put a Forest Rangers hat on him and the real live Smokey Bear was established as we see him in American posters today.

Smokey appeared on radio and television and was finally given a home at the Washington State Zoo.

In Australia, Smokey the Bear has been adopted by all States as a symbol of care with bush fires. As we do not have the brown bear of America, we have used our own delightful Koala to be the Australian Smokey and to bring the message of fire control to the Australian people.

Smokey's message in Australia is the same as his American cousin's. He tells how he hates bush fires, how they destroy his animal friends, how they burn timber which could be used for homes or furniture or even to make paper to print comics on. He tells how fire pollutes the good clean water of our rivers and creeks, how it scorches the grass our animals need for food, and how it promotes erosion to cause our rich soils to blow or wash away and our hills to

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.The True Story of the Real Smokey Bear Cont:

to become bare and marked with landslides. He tells us how men and women can also lose their homes and even their lives in forest fires.

He asks us all to take care with matches, with fires for cooking or camp fires. He asks us to observe the wise laws which are made for our protection, and to encourage others to think before they act with fire. His oft-repeated message is always the same,-

"ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT BUSH FIRES."

From a Rural Fires Board
Publication.

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Adventures with Malcolm Wilson:

At our next meeting on April 11th we will be taken on a trip that made Australian History. Mr. Malcolm Wilson a bachelor Downs Farmer, expert on natural history and a true Australian adventurer will tell of his 45 day trip crossing Australia for the first time from East to West. The expedition of six men, 3 four wheel drive vehicles and two-wheel-drive American motor cycle for scouting purposes left from Cape Byron N.S.W. and travelled by way of the Simpson Desert seeing parts of Australia never before seen by white man.

The group encountered plentiful bird life and dingoes which had no fear of man.

The meeting commences at 8 p.m.

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A Snake Tale from the Bush:

There are still bushmen who believe that if a goanna is bitten by a snake (the snake, by the way, is more frequently bitten by the goanna) it immediately counteracts the effect of the venom by eating the leaves of a plant. With out intruding into the specialist's domain, it is pretty safe to say that no one will ever find that plant. How can a venom which works only when injected into the blood under the skin, and which acts injuriously against the red corpuscles and the nerve centres, be affected by a plant taken as food and only the smallest part of which, after the slow process of digestion, can enter the body circulation? The venom would have done its worst long before they could possibly meet. The only possible antidote to snake venom must take the form of a "chaser" which enters the blood by the same path as the poison, namely injection under the skin.

The facts about the goanna seem to be that either through the protection of its thick skin or in some other way not yet ascertained, it is immune, or nearly so, to the effect of snake-bite; and, as it habitually eats snakes up to a convenient size for swallowing, the only antidote required in the case is by the snake against the goanna!

(by Donald Macdonald published in Land
of Wonder by Angus & Robertson with
their kind permission).

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REMEMBER YOUR BILLY AND STOUT SHOES FOR THE NEXT OUTING!

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