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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST.

March, 1974

Monthly newsletter of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalists  
No. 47 March 1974

P.O. Box 154 Stanthorpe.

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Mrs. R. Harslett  
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Mrs. D. McCosker  
Miss J. Westcott  
Mr. P. Higgins  
Mr. G. Marsden  
Mr. R. McCosker

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ACTIVITIES..

Meetings

4th Wednesday of each month at  
C.W.A. Rooms, 8p.m.

Outings

Sunday preceeding 4th Wednesday.

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Annual Subscription

Single \$1.50

Junior (Full time student) 50c

Family \$2.00

Programme

Field Outings:

Place

Date

Leader

Rivertree

24th March 1974

Mr. R. McCosker

Meetings:

Subject

Date

Speaker

Australian Fauna

27th March 1974

Dr. Kirkpatrick.

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DID YOU KNOW:

National Parks in Qunnesland have trebled in area in the last two decades and now cover about 2,500,000 acres, and are visited by more than 1½ million people each year.

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTSMinutes of meeting held 27th February, 1974.

Present 40 Apologies 12

Meeting opened at 8.20p.m.

Minutes of the previous meeting: Moved by Mr. W. Cathcart seconded by Mr. Mr. I. Jackson that the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed.

Correspondence In: 1. Newsletter from other Naturalists Clubs.  
2. The Queensland Hosteller  
3. Circular from Australian council for the Arts.  
4. Invitation for our club to comment on the land utilisation by the D.P.I.

Correspondence Out: 1. Letter to the Adult Education re advertising etc.  
2. Letter to Victorian Naturalists Club requesting 50 car stickers for our club.

Moved Mr. W. Newman, seconded Mrs. R. Harslett that the inward correspondence be received and the outward be adopted.

Business From The Correspondence: The club is not to take advantage of the Crafts grant scheme, mainly due to shortage of time.

A committee meeting will be held to consider the merits of and discuss the D.P.I. land utilisation survey. This was moved by Mrs. Z. Newman and seconded by Mrs. R. Harslett.

Treasurer's Report:	Credit Balance B/F	\$70.28
	Staples etc	\$ 1.26
	Duplicating	\$ 6.00
		7.26

\$63.02

Moved by Mrs. R. Leisemann, seconded by Mrs. H. Stevenson that the Treasurer's Report be accepted and accounts passed for payment.

Outings Report: Mr. R. Marsden reported on the February outing led by

Mr. T. Spiller at which 25 persons attended.

The next outing is to Rivertree, and is to be led by Mr. R McCosker.

General Business: Mr. B. McDonagh is to be contacted regarding the editorship of the club magazine.

The meeting closed at 8.50p.m. after which Mr. G. Monteith lectured to the club on the Northern Cape York Pen.

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Some Botanical Terms.

AQUATIC - growing in water

BRACTEOLE - a small bract immediately below the calyx of a flower

CALYX - the outer whorl of a flower, consisting of sepals.

DIGITATE - a compound leaf whose leaflets spread from a common centre, like fingers of a hand.

EPIPHYTE - a plant which grows upon trees but does not derive nourishment from them.

FOLLICLE - a dry fruit formed from single carpel containing more than one seed and splitting open along a definite lateral line e.g. fruit of Telopea and Grevilleas.

GLAUCOUS - dull green with whitish-blue luster.

HERB - a plant which does not have a woody stem. (unlike trees or shrubs)

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTS.CONCERNING THE MURRAY COD.

The large Murray cod, which sometimes attains a weight exceeding a hundred pounds, is perhaps the most important freshwater fish of south-eastern Australia. It is not restricted to the Murray proper but extends throughout that river's system from southern Queensland to South Australia. In recent years, through various causes, its numbers have become much depleted. Lance Wedlick, a man of much experience, provides an introduction to this great fish in his informative book of 1962, "Fishing in Australia".

Just how a fish like the Murray cod, which is spawned in a lagoon and spends its life eating everything it can find, can turn into such a fine table-fish is hard to understand. It is also strange and sometimes unfortunate, that good Murray cod fishing depends upon floods, for during the seasons of heavy flooding, when the big northern rivers spillover into the lagoons, the adult cod lay their eggs in these still waters. Here the young cod remain until the next flood releases them into the river. When a succession of drought years is recorded, there are no young fish to replace the fish caught, and the fishing deteriorates.

Although he <sup>is</sup> sometimes found roaming the river in search of food, the Murray cod is a stay-at-home. Give him a big deep hole and sink a fair size log in it, and he'll stop there until old age or an angler's hook evicts him. Of course, if the pool is a long one, the cod will cruise around it at night, even entering the shallows when food is abundant there.

As with most of our Australian wildlife, the Murray cod has a considerable number of aboriginal legends woven about it. The most peculiar of these, reported to have originated among the Darling River tribes, is that the cod carries on the membranous walls of its stomach a shaded map of its birthplace. This was supposed to have been made by the fish lying in the shade of the gum-tree during the heat of the day. Anglers have gone forth firmly convinced of this theory, and determined to fish in the shade of every big red-gum.

Much as I dislike disproving such a fascinating legend, the scientific truth is that there is no such map. During the summer days the cod is more likely to be found at the bottom of the deepest holes, where the water is cooler.

He is no dainty feeder like the trout. What he wants is something large enough to fill him. Birds, small rabbits, catfish, field mice, fresh-water crayfish, yabbies, bardie grubs, carp, and bush-worms are all eaten by the hungry cod. Sometimes you may catch a cod in whose stomach is found a number of stones. These stones are the lime deposits that help the freshwater crayfish to build his new shell after he's shed his old one. The big cod swallows the crayfish, digesting all of it except these stones.

Fishing on the bottom with bait is the most enjoyable way of catching cod. The bait fisherman chooses a shady spot on a sandbank, or along side a deep pool. Having baited with a barbie grub or other cod bait, he then casts it out, allowing it to sink to the bottom.....

Among the many stange baits used for Murray cod the centipede is easily the strangest. In his book 'Fish and Fisheries of Australia' T. C. Roughley tells of a professional fisherman who, when the river is high during the winter, use centipedes as bait. He gathers these from beneath the bark of the old trees. A single centipede is then fished on the surface of the water and 'if there's a cod within hundreds of yards, it will come to that bait'

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In cod fishing we can learn much from the Australian aborigines who have been forced to abandon their age-old method of building rock fish-traps for Murray cod. Nowdays they use a handline and a barber hook, baited with a large bardie grub. With a reasoning as sound as that of any angler they cast the impaled grub in at the top end of the pool, allowing its fragrance to seep through the water. Any cod in the pool is soon enticed to leave his shelter to find the tasty grub.

From Land of Wonder by Alec H. Chisholm  
with permission of the publishers  
Angus and Robertson Pty. Ltd.

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Talking of Aborigines legends about Cod fish reminds me about a story I once heard about Nurunderi and the Cod.

Nurunderi, one day saw a huge cod swimming down stream, and he followed it in his bark canoe. The River Murray, in those days was only a small stream, but as the cod swam away from Nurunderi its great body burst through the land and the river was enlarged to its present size.

By the time Nurunderi had followed the cod as far as Lake Alexandrina, he had almost given up hope of capturing so large a fish. He then remembered that, Nepele, his brother-in-law lived further down the Lake, and might be able to spear it. Nepele managed to spear the fish as it passed near his camp, after Nurunderi had signalled him that a large cod was swimming towards him.

By cutting the cod into many pieces which Nurunderi and Nepele they threw into the water, the two men created all the fish in Lake Alexandrina. As they did so, they decreed that one piece would be the perch, another would become the callop, another the mulloway, and so on it went, untill all the present day fish were named. A large part of the cod still remained, so Nurunderi threw this into the water, saying, "You continue to be a Murray cod"

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PLANTS IN ARMOUR.

To the inexperienced, the word Cactus conjures up a plant with terrible spines that are ever ready to inflict severe pain or wounds. This can be so with some species if they are mishandled or touched accidentally, but the same spines in many cases are the main attraction of the plant.

Cactus spines vary from harmless hairs to stout daggers eight inches long or more in length. In many cases they are beautifully marked or coloured, from glassy white through shades of yellow, brown, purple, red, and black. The spines of cacti are believed to have evolved from leaves during the evolution of the plants. Many have spines with thick hard coats through which no moisture is lost under the hot, dry desert conditions in which many of them grow. It is quite easy to understand that plants with a good spine formation are best defended from enemies in their native habitat and so have the best chance of survival. In the desert regions, animals have difficulty in finding water, and although the cacti may be rich in food and water for them, they find difficulty in ever reaching it. The cactus spines on doubt also give shelter to the plant from the scorching sun as their shadow continuously moves across the stem between sunrise and sunset.

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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTS.CRADLE MOUNTAIN - LAKE ST CLAIR NATIONAL PARK.

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"This must be a national park for all time. It is magnificent. Everyone should know about it, and come and enjoy it." wrote Gustaf Weindorfer from the top of Cradle Mountain.

Although not the first to enter the area now incorporated in the Cradle Mountain - Lake St. Clair National Park, Weindorfer could be considered the 'founder' of the park. Austrian by birth, Weindorfer married a Tasmanian and settled on a farm on the North West Coast. He visited the Cradle Mountain area several times before finally deciding to build Waldheim Chalet (Waldheim meaning forest home) in 1912. The chalet was built of King Billy Pine from the forest nearby, all the splitting and construction work being done by Weindorfer himself.

Weindorfer spent many years asking for a road to be built to the Cradle Valley. Although this was not done until after the Austrian's death he did live to hear that in 1922 an area of 158,000 acres was proclaimed a scenic reserve. Later, the area of the park was extended to 308,5000 acres, its present size.

Both the Cradle Mountain and Lake St. Clair areas seem to have been first visited in about 1826 by Van Diemen's Land Company explorers. This English grazing company had its original headquarters in the Stanley area in North-Western Tasmania from where it sent men to explore and trace road routes and to find new grazing lands. Jorgen Jorgenson, the "Convict King" is generally accepted to be the first white man to set eyes upon Lake St. Clair and Joseph Fossey the first to visit the Cradle Mountain area. W.S. Sharland, Surveyor-General of V.D.L. also claims to have discovered Lake St. Clair in 1832. The Lake was named in 1835 by George Frankland the then Surveyor-General.

During the next 50 years visits to both ends of the Park and to the more accessible mountains were made by prospectors, hunters, and walkers.

Situated in central Western Tasmania, Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park is the most famous of Tasmania's National Parks. Its 498 square miles of rugged mountain peaks and alpine moorland offer some of the finest scenery in Australia making the Park an ideal choice for bushwalking holidays. It exhibits a wide representative range of the state's montane flora and fauna in largely untouched conditions. The park can be divided into 4 main regions.

The Cradle Mountain Region, in the north is a country of wild open moorland and heath, broken by deep gorges and forest valleys, numerous lakes and tarns. Scene is dominated by Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff.

The Pelion Region is at the centre of the Park. Reached by tracks from the Arm River and the Overland Track. Consists of a central plain surrounded by the mountains Oakleigh, Pelion East, Ossa (highest peak in the Park and state, 5305') cut by rivers and creeks.

The Du Cane Region is rugged mountain range averaging 5,000'. The eastern streams form Lake St. Clair, while western slopes fall away into the Canning Valley.

Lake St. Clair is the main feature of the southern end of the Park. The deep lake approx. 650' is of glacial origin, and eleven miles in length. Mt. Olympus is to the west and Mt. Ida to the east and the Traveller Range.

March 1974.

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Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park co'td.

Summer is the most suitable to visit the Park due to it being the period of most reliable weather. This also coincides with flowering of most of the Parks Native plants.

Throughout Autumn, berries abound in a multitude of colours and leaves of the deciduous beech turn copper in colour prior to dropping before the winter snow.

With extensive experience and adequate equipment a winter trip can be a great success. In spring, wattle is in full bloom and offers a magnificent display of colour especially from the mountain tops.

For more detailed information write to:

National Parks and Wildlife Service,  
Magnet Court,  
Sandy Bay,  
TASMANIA. 7005

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OUTING TO RIVERTREE, MARCH 24th.

The Maryland and Boonoo Boonoo Rivers and Korealah Creek rise up on the New England Tableland (900m) and flow in tortuous fashion eventually dropping down into gorges and joining up at Rivertree (200m). The combined stream then being known as the Clarence River which in turn flows through Grafton and enters the ocean at Yamba/Iluka (of deep water port fame). Because of the rough gorge country downstream from Rivertree, there is no road from here running down the Clarence Valley and the only road access to Rivertree is from upstream via Liston on the Mt. Lindsay Highway.

Cunningham camped near here on the Maryland River in 1827. Most of the white man's history in this area was concentrated either further down the Clarence - John Dunmore Lang's separatists movement in the 1860's, the big Cadder-getters, the tugboat wars, the influx of Scottish and German settlers; or else up on the Tableland- Tin-mania, the Chinese Restrictions Act of 1888, the interstate railway; while Rivertree itself gets only small mention in the history books. The early east-west commerce between Tableland and coast passed it by, to the south along Ed. Ogilvie's line through Drake. However, after 1843, when Burnett surveyed a route north to Mt Lindsay, most of the mineral and other products of this area went out through Brisbane.

Rivertree had a small goldfield and smelter, the ruins of which remain today, and presumably some Chinese population, because a Joss House was built at Liston. In the 1930's the hoop-pine getters took a lot of timber from the heights. In the middle 1960's the area was re-prospected in some detail, so may be the picturesque lives of the yesteryear miner will be supplemented by the less picturesque one of his counterpart.

It is hoped that we will be able to inspect the old smelter ruins, and perhaps for the energetic, climb a ridge for views down the Clarence Valley. The outing will leave Weeroona Park at 9.30 a.m. SHARP, and we will be having lunch at the cars.

Robin McCosker  
Leader.

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## THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTS.

### SNAKES! Some interesting facts and tales.

' Four ruggard dried up looking children are playing about the house. Suddenly one of them yell's "Snake! Mother here's a snake."

The gaunt, sun browned bushwomen dashes from the kitchen, snatches her baby from the ground, holds it on her left hip, and reaches for a stick.

"Where is it?"

"Here! gone under the woodheap!" yells the eldest boy - a sharp-faced urchine of eleven. "Stop there Mother! I'll have him. Stand back! I'll have the beggar"

"Tommy, come here. or you'll be bit. Come here at once when I tell you, you little wretch!"

How often have you heard similar words uttered when one of those elongated, scaly, limbless bodies are sighted?. It is still as common as the day Henry Lawson wrote about the Drovers Wife.

With the passing of warm weather there has been a corresponding number of sightings of snakes, which can prove an interesting study subject, if you are that way inclined. On the 'surface' a snake is a reptile to be avoided but upon inspection some unusual facts are noted. A snakes eyes are devoid of lids, but are procted by a protective transparent scale, beneath which the eye ball moves. Sound is transmitted to a rudimentary internal ear by vibrations from the ground as there is no external ear. The forked rod-like tongue is principally a sensory organ used chiefly for touch.

The fangs in common with the other teeth are shead and replaced. Dorsals is the name given to the scales covering the upper part of the body, while those on the lower surface are known as ventrals.

Live food secured and killed by themselves is preferred, but a snake will sometimes eat freshly killed food in captivity. Insects, frogs, birds, mammals, fish and reptiles are usually killed for food either by constriction or injection of venom. Suffocation, squeezing or straight swallowing are also used by some species.

Shedding of the outer skin periodically is governed by the rate of growth. Usually the cast is entire but it can be shed in pieces. By working loose the skin at the lips and rubbing its head against some object it turns the epidermis backwards enabling the snake to crawl out leaving it inside out.

Some snakes are able to travell up to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour but few can keep up this speed for any length of time. From the earlist of times, by perpetuation of myths and popular fallacies largely based on ignorance and superstition snakes have been hedged with an aura of fear.

It is auatomically impossible for a snake to suck milk from a cow. In fact no preference is given for milk and a snake will drink water if given a choice.

Snakes will not go out of their way to attack unless molested. If a lone of retreat has been cut off a snake may make an attempt to strike.

A snake harbours no thoughts of revenge if its mate has been killed, but it will die before or after sundown depending entirely on the nature of the injuries.

There is no such creature as a 'hoop' snake which is said to take its tail in its mouth and bowls rapidly along the ground.

Snakes are not enticed or charmed by music as they are mainly insentive to air horn sounds. During charming acts the snake moves only to the rhythmic movements of the flautist or the flute while waiting an opportunity to strike. The swallowing of young to protect them is not done but most venomous snakes are cannibals and willswallow their own progeny when hungry.



Although snakes may provide some element of danger to the bushwalker if common sense is used there need not be any fear or any need to go 'looking' for trouble.

Ross Allan David.

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I watched them in the distance, six  
black and white duck  
flying in 'V' formation  
changing in flight  
to a long line and crying  
sadly as they went:  
it is a great burden  
to place upon six  
black and white duck to  
ask them to carry  
all the meaning of a mountain  
as they wing along its walls.

Wild Duck  
W. Hart-Smith.

Wild Duck  
W. Hart-Smith.

- INVOLUTE - Applied to floral organs whose edges are rolled inwards.
- KEEL - Applied to the the two lowest petals of a pea flower.
- LENTICEL - A breathing pore in bark.
- MUCRONATE - Terminating abruptly into a sharp point.
- NODE - Part of stem where leaf or leaves emerge.
- OBOVATE - Egg-shaped with the broad end towards the apex.
- PROSTRATE - Lying flat on the ground.
- RHIZOME - A prostrate or subterranean stem.
- SHRUBS - Woody plants not growing to the size of a tree and having several branches coming from the roots.
- TORUS - The swollen head of the flower stalk in which the parts of single flower are arranged.
- UNDERSHRUB - A small shrub whose flowering branches die off during winter.
- VILLOUS - Covered with long soft hairs.
- WING - The membranous margin of a seed or fruit; also applied to the lateral petals of pea flowers.

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There are nettles everywhere  
But smooth grasses are more common still  
The blue heaven is larger than the cloud.

D. Wiseman.

• 000 •



THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTS.Field Outing 24th February, 1974.

A symbol of events on that day we might say of this outing 'when old friends meet'. However; blessed with good weather and away on good time the day passed without incident in spite of some roads being not so good, but I am sure all those who participated enjoyed it and learned a lot. Special thanks to Ray whom I 'leaned on' very much because of 'uncertainties', Jean for her wealth of information, particularly 'The Brisbane Claim' and others with little bits and pieces that made the day it was. Thanks also to Les Smith, Mick Deston, Dr. Buchanan and Bob Reeves, for their kind permission to enter their properties for inspections and so on.

On to the 'Range Lookout' via Dalcouth, Kyoomba and Sugarloaf - leaving the main highway at farthest point at Dalcouth, then by Henry Daniells probably the oldest farming family in the area, their main stay 'Mother Earth' hence a happy family - the Gasparins, the Bill Mills family with a few old homes in between - some now deserted. First stop was Quart Pot Creek crossing and fringe of the Brisbane Claim, where much of its history was divulged, much I am sure a lot would not know. Proceeding by and exploring the properties mentioned and a brief stay at Osbaldestons 'Hill View', the dairy, blacksmith, water storage of that area were studied. Until recent years the famous Granny Smith apple grew, was tree ripened and many thousands of cases marketed. Cold storage was banana cases of apples stacked about the orchard and left to the frost and our winter. To-day with artificial this and that, too few know of and appreciate a real Granny Smith apple. On then to the old Sugarloaf School Site. Now here I approached a dear lady (Mrs. Taylor) to write me a little something of it. I graciously accepted her offer and here it is.

'Sugarloaf, eight miles from Stanthorpe was a village in 1909. Mrs Allison (Scotchish Lady with her nephews John and Jim Gordon had a mixed store, post office, saw mill and tannery. A very large residence of 40 rooms (2 maids) and entertained many eminent people. When the  $\frac{1}{4}$  tin dreges were working they built 12 homes for their imported employees, also a church and organ and services were conducted every month.

Naturally with all those working people about, the school attendance increased and had two teachers for many years while the boom was on. The wooden Sugarloaf had two rooms - a large one with open fire place and smaller one with heater - it was the only school in a large area: Sugarloaf, Paddock Swamp (now Eukey) Kyoomba and Dalcouth.

All social functions were held at the school - and many people came from Stanthorpe and Wilson's Downfall, to Ambulance Benefits etc. and school picnics. The plum tree at the school gate was always used for Palm Sunday.

The little Catholic Church (now at Bapaume) always had large congregations, and in 1917 if there was any special function at the church, the teacher marched her pupils across the road to see what was happening - quite unorthodox perhaps - but a diversion. Many Chinese children came from Chinatown at Dalcouth to the school.

From our properties at Sugarloaf - near Chinamans Flat - hundreds of Chinese would trot back and forth to Chinatown with a yolk on their shoulders and a basket bag on each end containing their food. They worked very hard sinking deep holes for tin - and the 'wags' around the place often covered the tops of a hole with slabs and then listened to the yelling of the poor chaps when their mates were late home. They were bad old days too!

Thank you Vi, and so I should she was my teacher.

After a picnic lunch a run to Lode Creek with Chinamans Flat and

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTS.Outing report con'td.

Red Hill to the right, where tin mining still goes on, then back to Sugarloaf which I had to skip as the day was getting on. There would be much to tell of here but perhaps for another outing and adjacent places. At the Border gate a brief stop was intended but proved otherwise, there was just so much of that Bower Bird and nest, and who would have thought native cat still roamed this area. This specimens size and colour was amazing. It was mentioned that the odd dingo was still about. Our thanks to Tim and Val White for their interest. To tell a story off a little boy lost would I'm afraid be too long and encroach on Mr. Editors time and space, but this little fellow was found at a point not far from here and survived all those days and nights and travelled nine miles, in the mid-winter. This area was then infested with dingoes and wild cattle. Perhaps someone older could tell it better - it was 55 years ago - a story that would fit in for naturalists and nature - it can only be surmised that to survive and for warmth he slept with the cattle, they in turn guarded him.

The lookout, after some effort for the older folk, but how rewarding a beautiful view of all about and in all directions. On descending and it getting late I had to abandon my flock and head for home. I am sure all enjoyed the day and I know get home safely - thanks for your co-operation.

Tom Spiller.

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Guest Spaecker February meeting.

Our spaecker on the 27th Feb. was Mr. J. Monteith a young man who has done what most Australians have not, He has travelled to the top portion of Cape York five times! These trips have been done in pursuit of his entomological studies of that region.

The members present really enjoyed the talk presented and later inspected a selection of butterflies and beetles which Mr. Monteith brought with him. Something which surprised most of us was the small amount of rain forest in that huge area, a patch near the extreme north, some thousands of acres of which are already felled for planned Aboriginal cattle project and several other comparatively small areas stretching south and divided by some hundred of miles, the balance covered sparsely by gums etc and mangroves.

The rainfall is high, but falls only during a short period; the rest of the year is very dry, the summers very hot, the winters very warm. The road which runs by the overland telegraph route is almost impassable, a four wheel drive vehicle being needed, and creek crossings are treacherous. To visit Bamaga on the tip of the cape a permit is needed, which must be obtained before hand, and literally most visitors are not very welcome, drop-ins being evicted.

Camera film has to be carefully protected from heat and or humidity. Mosquitoes can be very bad. Mr Monteith brought a very large map and a number of colour slides so that we felt we had made a visit there ourselves.

The flora and fauna on the Cape has some counterparts in New Guinea. The narrow shallow seaway separating Australia from New Guinea is dotted with islands, which were once the tops of hills being the northern termination of the Graet Dividing Range of Eastern Australia, so it is not strange to find an intermingling of flora, fauna, insects etc.

Mr. Monteith was introduced by Jean Harslett and a vote of thanks moved by Wal. Cathcart.

WF.

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AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

I thought we would see in last months' magazine a report of Bill and Margaret Flynn's unexpected visitor. He (or she) ambled along the hall and entered their spare bedroom, there to be found by Bill, after Margaret complained of a 'dog' wandering about the house.

It turned out to be a spiny ant eater, often called an Echidna. A popular name, now less used is 'Porcupine', which is inappropriate, for the true porcupines of Europe and America are really rodents and not related to our marsupials and monotremes.

The name Echidna is also really inappropriate as it is based on the Latin for a genus of eels! So the Spiny Ant Eater describes its main diet and appearance rather well. It is related to the Platypus, and lays an egg which it carries in a temporary pouch which forms during the breeding season.

The youngster after hatching, which takes about 14 days stays in the pouch until its spines become too irritating to mother, when it is evicted. It now appears to hibernate, and being well fed beforehand, a preliminary growth stage takes place before the young one goes forth to forage for itself.

Its diet of termites, ants and other small insects must be nourishing as a full grown TACHYGLOSSUS is a very strong animal, the great strength in its paws enables it to escape from the usual box which it is placed <sup>in</sup> by the unexperienced collector, and enables it to bury itself in a short time by furiously digging downwards if an enemy appears. Its soft underbelly thus soon protected and the vicious spines on the back being presented to the enemy, a very un-appetising looking dish. I can remember my father telling me as a child that he had made a meal from these animals on a number of occasions and that they were 'rather good to eat'.

The Spiny Ant Eater, though related to the Platypus, does not excavate a burrow or tunnel to live in, its digging role is entirely defensive, if unable to dig it rolls itself into a ball, a very prickly ball indeed.

When feeding, its tongue is rapidly thrust out and being sticky, ants etc adhere and are quickly drawn into the mouth. Having no teeth but having horny serrations on the back of part of the tongue which work against hard ridges on the roof of its mouth, food is soon broken up. Quite a large amount of dirt is taken in during eating and this aids the stomach to digest the meal. Its range is from Tasmania, through the mainland and into New Guinea.

W.F.

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SIGHTINGS OF SNAKES IN OUR DISTRICT AND ELSEWHERE.

This season I have seen more snakes than I can remember for many years, both in the drier parts of our district and to the Eastern watershed over the border in N.S.W. which has had quite a lot of rain.

One was a brown, rather slender, about six feet long, or should I say about 2 metres. The others were all red-bellied black, most about a metre in length, but one was a really big fellow, about one and two thirds metres, could have been two metres.

I have heard that two tiger snakes, one in High Street and one in Locke Street were killed this year, but I am not sure if they were positively identified. The High Street one was the second killed there in a little over 12 months.

The black PSEUDECHIS PORPHYRIACUS is found near streams and swampy places and hundreds were reported flushed out by the recent floods causing

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALISTSSnake sightings con'td.

concern to many, though they are not as dangerous as generally believed. The Red bellied black is closely related to the eastern brown snake DEMANSIA TEXTILLIS and the Mulga Snake, PSEUDECHIS AUSTRALIS both of which are dangerous brown coloured, and large when full grown, though the Eastern Brown as its name implies is found in most parts of Australia.

The Taipan, our deadliest snake is also a brown coloured species and occurs in many parts of Northern Australia, also the dry interior of N.S.W. and in Southern Queensland, and has been reported in North Eastern South Aust.

David Fleay once told me they are a very shy snake but when attacking they do so with lightning swiftness. Australia has more than 130 species of snakes and has the worlds greatest percentage of venomous, about 60%. These venomous snakes are members of a widely distributed family the ELAPIDAE which includes the Afro-Asian cobras, mambas and kraits and the New World Coral Snakes. They are front fanged being more or less fixed immovably to the jaw. Luckily only a few of these venomous snakes are dangerous to man, most are small, have small fangs and mild venom.

The tiger snake NOTECHIS SCUTATIS is found in many parts of Southern Australia and grows to two meters, compared to 3½ meters for the Taipan. It is variable in colour, is mostly a shade of grey or olive green with irregular often indistinct darker cross bands. Some can also be black and the venom of the Tiger Snake is very toxic. Good Night Pleasant Dreams.

W.F.

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NEWS FLASH

Speakers have been switched for our next meeting. Dr. Kirpatrick is to speak in April to suit or speaker scheduled for April, as he finds he can not speak in April.

SPEAKER FOR NEXT MEETING: B. MONCRIEF - Historic Natureland.

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DONT FORGET THE NEXT OUTING :

24th MARCH 1974. RIVERTREE.

LEADER : MR. ROBIN MCCOSKER.

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Thought for the month:

'Judging others is a dangerous thing. Not so much because you might make a mistake about them, but because you may be revealing the truth about yourself.'

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