

## THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

Monthly newsletter of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalists Club.

NO. 48 APRIL 1974

P.O. BOX 154 STANTHORPE, Q.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 1973-1974

PRESIDENT	Mr. F. Wilkinson
VICE-PRESIDENTS	Mr. R. Leisemann & Mrs. R. Harslett
SECRETARY	Mr. E. Walker (Phone 888)
TREASURER	Mrs. G. Leisemann (Cwlth Bank Bus. Hrs)
EDITOR	Mr. I. Jackson
NEWSLETTER SUB-COMMITTEE	Mr. & Mrs. W. Cathcart
LIBRARIAN	Mrs. Z. Newman
PUBLICITY OFFICER	
FLORA OFFICER	Mrs. D. McCosker
FAUNA OFFICER	Miss J. Westcott
GEOLOGY OFFICER	Mr. P. Higgins
YOUTH OFFICER	Mr. G. Marsden
BUSHWALKING OFFICER	Mr. R. McCosker

\*\*\*\*\*

ACTIVITIES

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

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

SINGLE \$1-50	JUNIOR (Full-time Student) 50¢	FAMILY \$2-00
---------------	--------------------------------	---------------

PROGRAMMEFIELD OUTING:

<u>PLACE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LEADER</u>
Rocky River Campout	20-21 April	Rob Leisemann

MEETING:

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
TASMANIA - Off the Beaten Track	24 April	David Bluhdorn



## THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 27th MARCH 1974:

Present 23                      Apologies 9

Meeting opened at 8.20 p.m.

Minutes of the previous meeting: Moved by Mr. W. Cathcart, seconded Mr. R. Marsden that the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed.

INWARD CORRESPONDENCE:

1. A letter from Mr. E. Sutton;
2. Car stickers for Club use;
3. Letter from Mr. R. Moncrieff suggesting June as the month for his lecture;
4. Letter from the Adult Education re procedure to be followed when requesting speakers fee, etc.
5. Newsletters from other Nats Clubs;
6. Press Releases from the D.P.I.

OUTWARD CORRESPONDENCE:

1. A letter to Mr. R. Moncrieff requesting a lecture;
2. Advertisement to Adult Education for Border Post and request for Speakers Fee for Mr. D. Bluhdorn in April.

Moved Mr. R. McCosker and seconded Mrs. J. Paskin that the Inward Correspondence be received and the Outward be adopted.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Balance b/f		\$63-02
Expenses:		
Car Stickers	\$15-00	
Petty Cash	\$ 1-87	\$16-87
CREDIT BALANCE		<u>\$46-15</u>

Moved by Mrs. G. Lesiemann, seconded by Mrs. Z. Newman that the Treasurer's Report be accepted and the accounts passed for payment.

OUTINGS REPORT: Mr. R. McCosker reported on the March Outing to Rivertree at which 30 people attended. The next outing will be a campout to Rocky River led by Rob Leisemann.

MEETING: The next meeting will feature Mr. D. Bluhdorn speaking on "Tasmania - Off the Beaten Track."

GENERAL BUSINESS: Owing to the absence of the President, the Committee concerning the land utilisation survey is to be held before the April meeting.

Car Stickers are available from the Treasurer for 30¢.

Mrs. R. Harslett has promised those members attending the Gibraltar Range outing in October an interesting evening with the Park Ranger, Mr. Rolly Paine.

The Brisbane Nats. Club will be camping at Harsletts over the Easter period and Mrs. Harslett extended an invitation for any of our members to join them on some of their activities.

CLOSURE: The meeting closed at 9 p.m. after which Dr. Kirkpatrick showed a film on Koalas and answered questions on their population theories.



## THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

POISONOUS PLANTS:

How many of us ever stop to think of the toxic substances in the plants we come in contact with every day. Unfortunately ignorance is the greatest danger. The housewife in the middle ages knew which herbs were poisonous and which were harmless, but unfortunately a lot of this knowledge has been lost, as most plants, except the most common species of vegetables and herbs are grown only for ornamentation. Some poisonous plants are not wholly toxic or only at certain times or under certain conditions. Potatoes are poisonous when the tubers are green, but the leaves and stems are always poisonous. Rhubarb leaves are toxic, but the stems are cooked and eaten with impunity. One safeguard is in the plants themselves - many taste so bitter that no one would want to eat them. Florists handling blooms from the Narcissus family often wear rubber gloves to protect any cracks or sores. Two indoor plants worthy of mention are the Diffenbachia and Colocasia, for if the sap gets on the lips severe pain and swelling can follow. Unfortunately many bright coloured berries attract children, who unlike birds, cannot possibly distinguish which are non-poisonous. Some of the more common ones found here are the Lily-of-the-Valley, Laburnum, Box and Oleander. Many of the Chrysanthemum family, Heleniums and of course the Nettle are skin irritants. One particularly dangerous such plant is the Castor Oil plant. Castor Oil is extracted from the seeds but the seeds eaten from the bush can cause fatal gastroenteritis.

---\*\*\*---

SUGGESTION: Perhaps one of our members could write an article occasionally on what plants to grow, how to care for them and other relevant information.

CONTRIBUTED BY A MEMBER

---\*\*\*---

Travelling down (or up) the Cunningham's Gap road near Mitchell's Gully one has been able for some years now, to enjoy the tinkling calls of Bellbirds. These birds live in colonies and when once finding a congenial place to live and find sufficient food they tend to become a more or less permanent fixture.

Their calls sound like the tinkling of many small bells and with the surrounding trees as a perfect setting a listener cannot help but experience a pleasant thrill, especially if one walks carefully in amongst them endeavouring to catch a glimpse. As one progresses the nearer birds become silent and later join in again as you move along. A single call emitted by many birds make the bell like concert.

If you watch carefully, you may catch sight of a small greenish coloured bird smaller perhaps than you expected to see, with a yellowish green breast patch, and a blackish streak going backwards from the beak and also a yellowish patch on the cheeks.

Bellbirds are insect and nectar eaters.

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

AN APPEAL IS MADE FOR ARTICLES FOR OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER. COME ON ALL YE FAITHFUL BIRDWATCHERS (feathered birds) GEOLOGISTS, BOTANISTS, BUG-CHASERS AND SO ON - WE COULD DO WITH MORE MATERIAL !!



## THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

REPORT ON RIVERTREE OUTING - 24th MARCH LED BY ROB McCOSKER:

About 30 members attended the last outing of the Nats. Club which was to the Rivertree Area. The weather was most kind to us, although threatened by large storm clouds, the day remained hot and summery.

We drove straight down to Rivertree, some 50 km (30 mls) from Stanthorpe, and parked beside the River at a delightful shady picnic spot. From here we took a short walk downstream to the Junction of the streams which form the Clarence River. I have an apology to make here as at the outing I called the stream flowing in from the North the Cataract River - actually it is Koreelah Creek; The Cataract flows into the Clarence from the South some 16 km downstream. From the junction we walked on downstream to the site of the old Rivertree township, and returned along the road to the cars for lunch.

After lunch we set off upstream to inspect the old smelter ruins. Quite near the chimney we were looking down a deep vertical mineshaft when someone explained there was a snake in the shaft. Sure enough there it was on the opposite wall, hanging almost vertically by its tail like an exposed tree root, with its head down and extended out from the wall some 20 - 25 cm above an almost sheer drop of about 6 m. The snake had the appearance of a green tree snake but why it should be found in a mine shaft and then retreat when disturbed into a hole in the ground remains a mystery. Another interesting discovery quite nearby in a pit built of bricks, obviously the remains of the old smelter workings, was the skeletal remains of two goannas. Since the pit was only about 1 m deep, we can only assume that the unfortunate reptiles fell into it while fighting and fought to the death, or until they were too exhausted to climb out.

A little further uphill, towering above the mineshaft and surface ruins, we inspected the chimney of the one time smelter. The chimney has stood for over 80 years, though I have been unable to find out exactly when it was built. Over the years, many of the bricks from around its base have fallen out or has been gouged out and no doubt one day it will topple to the ground.

Still further uphill from the chimney is a larger, almost vertical shaft which, judging from the amount of rubble around it, must have yielded the major supply of ore for the smelter. It has a well engineered tunnelling leading into it which has been built to allow water from the shaft to run away downhill, and at the same time prevent water from a nearby natural gully, at a higher level, from flooding the shaft. The tunnelling is still quite sound, and most members inspected it with the aid of a torch.

Since the day was so hot, most of the members returned slowly to the cars, except some of the younger ones who hurried back for a swim in the River. After we had all returned to the cars, and had our cups of tea etc., we drove up to the Boonoo Boonoo River crossing to see the flying fox, or cable car built across the river for emergencies when floods have cut the road. A few of the braver members adventured out over the River in the frail looking craft, much to the delight of the on-lookers. As it was then about 5.30 p.m. we headed back to Stanthorpe after another enjoyable outing.

Robin McCosker



## THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

LOCAL BIRDLIFE:

Most of us in this area are fortunate enough to wake each morning to pleasant bird sounds of one kind or another, even if it be the noisy rooster in someone's back yard ! Our usual first bird sound is the wolf whistle from a pet magpie belonging to our next door neighbour, or the gentle whistles and chirps of the friendly family of wrens which nest in the garden. What a shock one recent morning to hear some very raucous screeching coming from the paddock at the rear of the house, and what a lovely surprise for us ! Our first glimpse ever of the yellow tailed black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus Funereus*). - Just three of them, what seemed to be Dad, Mum and Junior. Dad busily tearing the bark of an Acacia in search of a nice fat grub for his family's breakfast. What a magnificent creature he was, at least two feet tall, Mother being quite a bit smaller and nowhere as noisy as Dad. They stayed in the area for quite a while in spite of being harrassed by local magpie residents. They tried every tactic in the book to dislodge the Cockatoos from their feeding area, but finally had to give up and allow the Cockatoos to remain. It was at least an hour later before they took off in all their glory, Dad having a wingspan of about five feet with lovely yellow tail feathers fully displayed, and still our treat was not finished as they came back the next morning to join us for breakfast, and sure enough the magpies too turned up to hustle them again and this time succeeded as they did not remain very long. Other than a small paragraph in Cayley's Bird Book we have been unable to find out any further information on these birds. Perhaps one of our members might have an interesting story or two to tell of them.

CONTRIBUTED BY A MEMBER

-----\*-----\*-----\*-----

Our speaker for our last meeting was Dr. Kirkpatrick from The Hermitage Research Station, near Warwick, who spoke on Koalas. It is hoped to give a full report in our next issue.

-----\*-----\*-----\*-----

The Club is sorry to learn that our Fauna Officer, Miss Joan Westcott is ill in the Brisbane General Hospital and members wish her a speedy recovery.

-----\*-----\*-----\*-----

Don't forget the CAMP-OUT this weekend. Don't forget that extra blanket. See article on the following page.

-----\*-----\*-----\*-----



APRIL 1974

## THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

CAMPOUT TO ROCKY RIVER - 20th & 21st APRIL:

Departure time from Weerona Park will be 9 a.m. Saturday morning. We will be travelling south, through Tenterfield, then turning left at the first street past the Golden Fleece Service Station (38 miles to this point). It is then just a matter of following the main road for another 22 miles approx. and a road to the right (signposted South Branch Rocky River) leads to the Campsite after another 4 miles, just past a crystal clear stream (Boundry Creek).

For those who may come later on in the day it is intended for the main party to take the left road at the South Branch sign and have lunch at a spot approx. 10 miles down the River and then return to the Campsite later in the afternoon.

There will be plenty to see for everyone including the oldies, over the weekend as the beauty of the area can be seen with a minimum of walking and mainly driving. However for the more energetic, a hike will be made up Boundry Creek on Sunday (A cut lunch will be required). There are numerous cascades and waterholes to be seen.

For those who do not wish to camp come down for the day on Sunday as it will be well worthwhile. There is plenty of fresh water at the Campsite, and a Bar-B-Que plate will be available. The planned round trip through to Drake is not now possible due to the washouts in the road.

Rob Leisemann

+++++.+++

Guest Speaker for next meeting will be David Bluhdorn who will be speaking on "Tasmania - Off the Beaten Track". Date - 24th April.

+++++++

Our own Nats. Club Car Stickers are now available at a cost of 30c. each. See our Treasurer. The Campout Trip could be the first outing for them!!

+++++++