

August 1977

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

OF

THE STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 1977/1978.

P.O. Box 154
Stanthorpe, Q., 4380.

President
Vice-Presidents

Secretary
Treasurer
Newsletter Editor
Newsletter Sub.-Committee (3 months)
Publicity
Librarian
Flora
Fauna
Geology
Youth
Bushwalking
Committee

Mr. Tom Archer
Mr. Noel Butler
Mr. Colin Hockings
Mrs. Janet Hockings.
Mrs. Dot Archer
Mrs. Jean Harslett
Mrs. Aileen Mc. Allister
Mrs. Ailsa Wilkinson
Mrs. Millie Marsden
Mrs. Dore Mc. Cosker
Mr. Brian Mc. Donagh
Mr. Maurice Passmore
Mr. Ian Jackson
Mr. Errol Walker
Mrs. Jean Harslett
Mr. Tom Chapman
Mrs. Irene Chapman
Mr. Frank Wilkinson

MEETINGS 4th. Wednesday of each Month in the C.W.A. Rooms at 8 p.m.

OUTINGS EACH SUNDAY PRECEEDING THE FOURTH WEDNESDAY

Single \$2.00

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Family \$3.00

PROGRAMMEAUGUST OUTING

Place Chapmans Property... Date 21st August 1977... Leader Mr. T. Chapman
HALF DAY From noon.. Find own way, see directions over.

* * * * *

ANNUAL MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY JULY 27, 1977

Present - 29

Apologies - 11

The President extended a welcome to all present. As a mark of respect for our fellow member Bill McCosker the members stood for one minutes silence.

Minutes - The minutes of the previous Annual Meeting were read and moved by Mrs. M. Marsden. Seconded N. Butler. Carried.

Correspondence - Nil.

August 1977

Financial - Balance Sheet for 1976-77 was read and Mrs. D. Archer moved that it be accepted. Seconded D. Thompson. Carried.
Credit Balance \$30.35

President's Report - It was a good year despite some outings being marred or cancelled because of rain. Thanks were extended to leaders of outings and office bearers. Coolmunda area project has not come to fruition yet but extension to Girraween appreciated. Highlight was the combined campout with other Nats clubs.
President Tom Archer moved that his report be received. This was seconded by Mrs. J. Harslett and supported by Mr. N. Butler who both thanked Tom for his leadership and to the executive for their efforts.

<u>Election of Office Bearers</u> -	President	- Colin Hockings	nominated by Mrs. M. Marsden	Declined
		Tom Archer	" " W. Cathcart	Accepted
	Vice Pres.	Noel Butler	" " J. Stevenson	"
		Colin Hockings	" " T. Archer	"
	Secretary	Janet Hockings	" " D. Archer	"
	Treasurer	D. Archer	" " N. Butler	"
	Newsletter Editor	Jean Harslett	" " D. Archer	"
	Newsletter	A. McAllister	" " J. Stevenson	"
	Sub. Com.	(for 3 mths.)		
	Publicity	A. Wilkinson	" " W. Cathcart	"
	Librarian	M. Marsden	" " W. Cathcart	"
	Flora	Dore McCosker	" " J. Harslett	"
	Fauna	Brian McDonagh	" " T. Archer	"
	Geology	M. Passmore	" " D. Archer	"
	Youth	Ian Jackson	" " D. Archer	"
	Bush			
	Walking Committee	Errol Walker	" " W. Cathcart	"
		Jean Harslett	" " J. Stevenson	"
		Tom Chapman	" " W. Cathcart	"
		I. Chapman	" " W. Cathcart	"
		F. Wilkinson	" " T. Chapman	"

Business - Nil

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

J.E. Stevenson Hon. Sec.

Monthly Meeting held on Wednesday July 27th, 1977

- Apologies and attendance as per annual meeting.

Minutes - That the minutes be taken as read was moved by M. Marsden seconded N. Butler. Carried.

Correspondence - Inward: Mrs. D. McCosker, S.G.A.P. (re wildflower exhibit), N.P.A. (Safety rules), E. McCulloch, M. Bermie, M.S. Moulds, Brookvale Park.
Magazines from N.P.A. Vol 47-No.5, D. Downs, July Down Under Vol.16 No.3, Chinchilla Vol.11 No.7.
Outward: N.P.A., Q'ld. Nats, D. Downs Nats, Chinchilla Nats, 4QS, Adult Education return, Mrs. Rickard.
Moved by L. Thompson, seconded Mrs. M. McDonald that the inward be received and outward endorsed. Carried.

August 1977

Financial - Mrs. D. Archer moved that credit of \$30.35 be received and accounts for C.W.A. \$4, Rovers \$3, Postage \$11.83 be passed for payment. Seconded W. Cathcart. Carried.

Outing Report - Mrs. Jean Harslett expressed thanks to Mrs. Rickard for guiding us and allowing us access to her property - Undercliffe. The Pattersons Scrub area was sub-tropical and very interesting considering it is so close to Stanthorpe. There were several kinds of orchids, ferns, lawyer vines and in all a most enjoyable day for the 38 who attended.

Next Outing: This will be arranged at a Committee Meeting to be held on August 4 at 7.30 p.m.

Business - Members who can are requested to gather wildflowers for the Society of Growing Australian Plants exhibition on September 3 and 4 and are requested to name them where possible and to leave them with Tom Chapman for packing on September 1st. Brookvale Park also request them for their Festival on August 20-28th. Mr. N. Butler moved that Club fees stay as they are but that they be discussed fully at the next meeting. Seconded D. Thompson. Carried.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20 p.m.

A short programme of slides of last years outings was shown to "Remember Last Year" after which supper was served.

J.E. Stevenson. Hon. Sec.

Thanks - All club members would like to endorse the remarks expressed on behalf of the executive and thanks come from all club members for the excellent service Tom Archer (President); Joan Stevenson (Secretary) and Dot Archer (Treasurer and Newsletter Editor) have given during the last year and members agree that this team as above average in contribution and efficiency, and made last year a very effective one.

Next Outing - A half day outing to Mr. Tom Chapman's property. Date 21st August 1977. Members to find own way there and arrive at noon. Directions...Proceed north from Stanthorpe, turn right into a private road at 5 miles (Tom is not a kilometer man either!). See NATS sign - should you reach the crest of the hill and see the Q.A.T.B. two way radio mast, you've gone just too far. Proceed in an easterly direction leaving Colin and Janet's home on your right and continue on to Tom and Irene Chapman's home (was John Long's property). Mr. Tom Chapman has suggested a new thought for the August outing. He has invited us to visit his property, and a 5 acre block - This block has no special plants, sensational rock formations or special features. Here he hopes the members will endeavour to observe and see what can be found. Tom's idea is a follow-up on a programme given by Jean Harslett, earlier in the year depicting that great beauty and interest can be found in the simplest things and almost anywhere. That naturalists should be sensitive to the denizen of life, wherever we find ourselves is Tom's aim. Thank you Tom for the original approach to this outing - see you on 21st August. Bring your spy glasses and see what you can find.

Committee Meeting - Held at Mr. & Mrs. Tom Archer's home on 4th August with 14 members present. Main business discussions on programmes for both meetings and outings for forthcoming year arranged.

July Outing Report - Paterson's Scrub. This fine area of State Forest is adjacent to "Undercliffe" property owned by Mr. & Mrs. Dick Rickard, who kindly provided information and guidance and gave permission for us to visit the area. It was quite exciting for members to see so close to Stanthorpe sub-tropical scrub.

July Outing Report (contd.)

As we left the semi-cleared country and entered the State Forest the same gave way to the tall timbers of Messmate, Brown Gum and Red Gum, all good timber yielders. Adjacent to the scrub country were some fine tall tree ferns (one boasted six-tops) and the tall growing shaft-like silvery boles of the Sydney Blue Gum - also sought by timber getters. Beneath all was a soft green carpet of Mountain Bracken or False Bracken (*Culcita dubia*). The soft green colouring of the fern - especially when lifted by shafts of sunlight added much beauty to the forest country. Mingled with the fern the stiff green leaves of *Smilax australis* and the large yellow flowering *Hibbertia scandens*, Dainty Greenhood orchids were found amongst the tree ferns and bracken and were *Pterostylis curta* (Blunt Greenhood) and *Pterostylis mutans* (nodding Greenhoods or Parrot Beaks).

In the scrub itself we saw Figs, Giant Stinging Trees, Native Tamarind, Cedars, Lawyer Vines, Celery Wood plus Scrub Box (*Tristania*), Treeferns, Elkhorns, Crows Nests, and "Dagger", "Pencil" and Orange Blossom Orchids, to mention but a few.

Nests were found and the tail of a Greater Glider. Small Red Scrub Wallabies and the larger dark Wallaroo were seen.

Paterson's Scrub was named after Mr. Bob Paterson Smr. who cleared land in the vicinity in the early 1900's for a farm, while Undercliffe received its name from the home town on the Isle of Wight of the properties original owner. The road we used was the original access and came from Willsons Downfall. In those days the Rivertree road was unknown. Later in the day the party explored the Undercliffe Falls and the most energetic climbed to the bottom and up the face of the falls. Thirtyeight members including families attended.

Millie Marsden adds an interesting sidelight to our July outing showing Nats is for everyone.

The outing to the Rickard property at Undercliffe was a source of delight to me for a number of reasons. Firstly the area of Undercliffe Falls is one of our favourite places and we have many happy memories from the numerous occasions we have shared the area with friends. However we had never been in this particular area before and on entering the homestead yard we were met with the wonderful old rural scene of a man preparing his horse's hoof for shoeing. 'Tis many moons since I had seen this farm chore in operation.

The route was well signposted and we readily caught up with the rest of the party. When we stopped the car I noticed a lovely wattle tree in heavy bud and imagined the beauty to come when this lovely lady would be dancing in her bright yellow frock.

Mrs. Harslett and Mrs. Rickard told us much of the history of the area and it was wonderful to share the stroll through the tropical forest area with them. Many delightful things were seen and were added to the memory box - the huge old bole of a tree from which new young saplings were growing at the root edges, the cunning little nest made from moss swinging on a branch, the tail of a large glider caught high in the branches, majestic trees and the remains of those cut down for timber many years ago.

Lunch, as usual, was most informal and we seemed to have three close groups, talk issuing back and forth between the groups. I suddenly realised that we were extremely fortunate in that we had a group incorporating three generations of one family on one side and the other group contained four generations of another family.

I think it speaks well for the Stanthorpe Field Nats Club that they do offer - things of interest to such a wide range of ages. It was great to have the Burton-McCosker family with four generations ranging in age from six months to eighty

August 1977

Millie concludes

years plus. Mrs. Gemmell the gracious mother of Mrs. Harslett, held court on the other side of us and the group included Mr. & Mrs. Rob Harslett, their son and daughter.

While we were the last to arrive at the venue and the first to leave, I am sure that no one derived more enjoyment than the Marsdens and extend grateful thanks to the Rickards and those who organised the outing.

Fairy Wrens

Birds are much more fortunate than mankind for, in the main, they do not appear to have a colour problem, though there are exceptions. Nature has been kinder to our feathered friends and instead of whole colours such as black, white, yellow, red such as we have in humanity, we find amongst birds a mixture of colours in most species. Imagine the multi coloured Parrots, Birds of Paradise, Finches etc.

Colouration of birds has always fascinated me and one small group of birds comes readily to mind. This is a group, some members of which will be familiar to most people but its variety and widespread range on this continent and the nearby islands may not be so well known. I refer to the family of Wrens or as Neville Cayley called them "Fairy Wrens". There are thirteen distinct species of Wrens with numerous races and a very interesting thing about these birds is that no particular locality has more than, at most, three representatives. In the main they are limited to one or two members only. The Generic name for the group is MALURUS from the Greek meaning "Soft Tail". Specific names are descriptive such as CYANEUS meaning "blue", CALLAINUS "turquoise", SPLENDENS "shining", PULCHERRIMUS "most beautiful", AMABILIS "lovely", names given to them by scientists who admired these beautiful birds very much.

For reasons which are not always clear in bird life, the males are mostly the colourful ones and the family of Wrens is no exception. The female Wrens are drab coloured as a rule, being brown and greys. One exception is the female Lovely Wren which has bluish grey upper parts with a light buff and white breast. The best known member of the family is the Blue Wren with its bright blue head, blue back, dark blue tail, iridescent purplish breast, brown wings and white abdomen.

Nesting habits of the Wrens are very much alike. The nests which are composed of bark, cobwebs etc. are dome shaped with a side entrance and lined usually with hair, wool or any soft materials the birds can find. The nests are usually very close to the ground, often in high grass, blackberry vines etc. Occasionally a nest will be found quite well off the ground in a bush or vine, probably an attempt by the birds to get beyond the reach of cats etc. The eggs are usually three in number, sometimes four, and the colour of them is flesh or reddish white with dots and blotches of pale red and reddish brown, the markings being more numerous on the larger end of the egg. The eggs take about two weeks to hatch and the young are usually ready to leave the nest when about three weeks old. Male Blue Wrens go into what is called Eclipse Plumage, resembling females; after each breeding season until they are about three years old. After this age, after each moult they retain their beautiful colours.

Possibly one explanation for the difference in colour of the sexes can be found in the breeding season, the drab little female going about her business of nesting and feeding youngsters is much more unobtrusive than the gorgeous male and consequently much less likely to be seen by potential predators such as hawks etc. The food of Wrens consists entirely of insects and insect larvae and it is estimated that a young Wren will eat more than its own weight of such food in twenty four hours.

Fairy Wrens (contd)

Members of the family of Wrens have been observed from Captain Cook's first voyage onwards with specimens appearing in a collection made by Sir Joseph Banks on the first voyage. The field observations made by John Gould and his fellow workers were remarkably accurate and complete when one considers the time they were made and the difficulties encountered by these observers.

A quick summary of the different Wrens and their range in Australia may be of interest.

- Blue Wren (MALURUS CYANEUS) Central Western Qld, Western N.S.W. and N. West Victoria to the Border of W.A.
- Black Backed Wren (M. MELANOTUS) Central Western Qld, Western N.S.W. N. West Vic. to the Border of W.A.
- Turquoise Wren (M. CALLAINUS) Spencers Gulf S.A. to Central Australia
- Splendid Wren (M. SPLENDENS) S. West Australia from the Stirling Ranges to Geraldton.
- Black and White Wren (M. LEUCOPTERUS) Dirk Hartog Island and Barrow Island.
- Blue and White Wren (M. CYANOTUS) Interior S. Qld, N.S.W. and Victoria to the coastal districts of W.A.
- White Backed Wren (M. LEUCONOTUS) Interior of S.A.
- Variegated Wren (M. LAMBERTI) Coastal districts of S. Qld and N.S.W.
- Purple Backed Wren (M. ASSIMILIS) Qld, N.S.W., S.A., and Dirk Hartog Island.
- Red Winged Wren (M. ELEGANS) Coastal districts of S.W. Australia from Perth to Albury.
- Lovely Wren (M. AMABILIS) Tropical Northern Australia.
- Blue Breasted Wren (M. PULCHERRIMUS) S.A. to W.A.
- Red Backed Wren (M. MELANOCEPHALUS) N. West Aust across Tropical Northern Aust. to N.Q. & Eastern Aust. as far south as Hunter River
- Purple Crowned Wren (M. CORONATA) From Derby to Leichhardt River N.Q.

To complete the group there are the Emu Wrens so named because of the peculiar structure of their tail feathers which closely resemble the feathers of the Emu. Drawings and paintings of Emu Wrens were amongst the earliest to be recorded and include paintings by the convict artist Thomas Watling who came to Australia in October 1792. There are two main species of Emu Wrens STEPIITURUS (from the latin and greek meaning "stem tail") MALACHURA which can be found from Southport in Queensland around the coastline to Shark Bay in W.A. and the Rufous Crowned Emu Wren (STEPIITURUS RUFICEPS) which is found at North West Cape, Mid western Australia. The Emu Wrens are much more difficult to observe than most of the other Wrens as they are very shy and quiet in their movements.

... Contributed by Bill Barker.

A centipede was happy quite
Until a toad in fun
Said, "Pray which leg moves after which?"
This raised her doubts to such a pitch
She fell exhausted in the ditch
Not knowing how to run.

(Ex. Centipedes by Ada Jackson)