

APRIL 1978.

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST CLUB.MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THETHE STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB.

P.O. BOX 154.

STANTHORPE. Qld.4380.

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MEETINGS. 4th WEDNESDAY of each MONTH at the C.W.A.ROOMS at 8p.m.OUTINGS. Each SUNDAY PRECEDING the FOURTH WEDNESDAY.ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS.SINGLE. \$2.00.FAMILY. \$3.00.APRIL OUTING Pikedale Station and old homestead.

Date April 23 rd. 1978.

DEPARTURE WEEROONA PARK 9.30a.m. Sharp

Leader Mr. Don Lightfoot.

The Pikedale station homestead has been an historic landmark for many years. The station was taken up around 1843 and was known as the Pikedale Run. Come one and all and view the crumbling stone-work that suggests an earlier era of magnificence.

Don Lightfoot.

Meeting Programme. Mr Ian Jackson on a visit to South Australia.

MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING held WEDNESDAY 22nd. MARCH 1978.

Present 26

Apologies 5.

Minutes. It was moved by Mr.Cathcart and seconded by Mrs.Harslett that the minutes as per the March magazine be taken as read. Carried.

Correspondence. Inward. was received from National Parks and Wild Life Service. Information leaflets about Kangaroo Island Cape Hillsborough, Girraween and Bunya Mountains, Darling Downs Naturalist March, Warwick Walker Vol5 No.6, and Vol.5 No.7, Down Under Vol.17 No.1, N.P.A. March 1977, Vol.48 No. 2., Umbirirra Vol.12 No.3., Contact Vol.V1. No.1.

Outward. was forwarded to 4QS., Hunter Publications, re information on 'Billions more to Feed', Mr.J.Harden and Mr. D. Vernan.

Financial Report. February 27th. 1978 Bank Balance \$108.91  
 Receipts \$12.60  
 (Room rent collection) Total \$111.51.  
 Expenses  
 Feb 22nd. Rover Scouts Dup. Magazine. \$3.00.  
 " " Postage on magazine \$ 11.34.  
 " " C.W.A. rent \$ 4.00  
 Total \$ 18.34.  
 March 22 nd. 1978 Bank Balance \$ 90.57  
 Cash on hand \$2.60  
 Total \$93.17.

It was moved by Dot Archer and seconded by Colin Hockings... Carried.

Outing Report. by Tom Chapman (see report written )

Next Meeting. Mr. Ian Jackson will be presenting a slide programme on South Australia on Wednesday 26th.April.

General Business. It was moved by Tom Chapman and seconded by Mr. W.Cathcart that letters of protest be sent to the State and Federal Governments concerning survival training for the army in the Simpson Desert, where their diet consists of native fauna... Carried.

Jean Harslett extended a welcome to members to attend the Easter camp of the Queensland Naturalist Club to be held at the Harslett's property.

Following the fire disaster experienced by Mrs.Wiseman, Mrs. Wilkinson suggested that the club send a bouquet of flowers together with a letter to convey our condolences.

OUTING REPORT on BOONOO BOONOO FALLS AREA. by TOM CHAPMAN.

On Sunday the 19th. March, despite threatening weather 11

3.  
cars and 25 people took part in a very enjoyable outing to Boonoo Boonoo.

The first contingent left at 9.15 am. as a compromise between those who read the time as 9.00 am. sharp and those who heard it as 9.30a.m. Tom and Dot Archer stayed for any definite 9.30 starters and we eventually arrived at our first point of interest the first creek crossing on the way into BoonooBoonoo Falls.

The elastic travelling arrangements set the pattern for the days activities and when everybody knows where they are going and how to get there, it seems to me that individual or small group travel is preferable to a large convoy particularly where roads are dusty. Likewise to cater for all age groups and interests. I feel encouragement could be given to splitting up into small groups, joining up again for lunch and discussions. For instance on this outing Colin and Janet Hockings made their own pace as pathfinders, leaping from rock to rock and I would like to see more of the young and or energetic attend outings making them as strenuous as they like. Many older steadier members still made it to the bottom of the falls and back but at their own pace with plenty of stops for photography and other interests. Still others, not wanting to take part in the scramble to the rocks below and showing wise judgement in not tackling something too strenuous, nevertheless spent a most enjoyable afternoon around the top of the falls with plenty to interest them.

Hence for this particular outing I make no apologies for not organizing in detail the actual venue and I was happy that it happened the way it did. I realize it would not be possible or desirable to conduct all outings in this way but I do feel that thought could be given to alternative programmes to encourage the energetic adventurous types to do their own thing while at the same time and certainly in most cases in the same area provision is made for other members to enjoy themselves without attempting the impossible. Surely the idea of our outings is for as many people as possible to get out of our in to the bush, enjoy and appreciate it and learn something about the natural attractions of our area, going home satisfied and not frustrated nor exhausted.

Now back to describing some details on the outing which is what I am supposed to be doing. At our first stop, a rocky tributary into the main BoonooBoonoo water course, we enjoyed wandering around on the large rock expanses. The bare rock has been cut into numerous natural channels and holes by the billions of gallons of crystal waters that meander or cascade into depressions, and cataracts and over minature waterfalls.

As is so typical on the Granite Belt, in this area of solid granite, nature has produced its own rock gardens ranging from individual plants surviving, in fact thriving, in tiny cracks in the rock to quite large gardens with a great variety of plants that flourish where enough soil accumulates to support their growth. On this excursion we had to be satisfied with odd blooms but it was not hard to visualize those rock gardens, a mass of flower in Spring when Kunzeas, Callistemons and Leptospermums vie for attention of the honeyeaters and the shutter bugs. Patches of Flannel Flowers (Actinotus helianthus) surprised us with good displays of flowers; flowers the so called petals of which are strictly bracts

that surround many tiny flowers in the centre. The genus (*Actinotus*) is confined to ~~Australia~~ Australia with a total of 13 species, 3 of which are found in Queensland and 2 in Stanthorpe.

Vivid blue *Lobellias* and sky blue Blue Bells : made splashes of colour. Both of these dainty beauties have much in common being members of the same family as the English Bluebells (*Campanules*) and their genus names were derived from a similar source *Lobelia* after Lobel a 17th. century Flemish botanist while *Wahlenbergia* a 19th. century Swedish botanist's name was given to *Wahlenbergia* (Bluebells). Remarkably they even share the same species name, *GRACILIS* which is obviously very appropriate for both plants. Thus these plants so similar botanically still have their own very definite floral characteristics. In addition to their distinctive colour *Lobelia gracilis* has three of its five petals much larger than the other two making it readily identifiable, while *Wahlenbergia gracilis* has five equal petals united part of the distance to form a shallow cup. We saw and appreciated these two graceful ladies in blue in many dainty little gardens.

On the bare open rock blue *Plectranthus* and white *Isotoma* flowered where it seemed impossible for a plant to find a foothold and *Homoranthus* fanned out from the shrubby growth, spreading out over the rock, forming grey-green layers of foliage like carefully tended terraces. Would'n't we love just one patch of these natural gardens in our back yard and aren't we fortunate to have them so readily available to admire and enjoy. It's interesting to note that *Isotomas* are members of the same ~~equally-cut~~ family as *Lobelias* and *Wahlenbergias* and the genus name *ISOTOMA* is derived from a flower characteristic *ISOS* = equal and *TOMA* a cutting, referring to the five equal cut or shaped petals. Another important point to remember with *ISOTOMAS* is to wash your hands thoroughly after handling the plant, as the juices have a very uncomfortable, in fact quite dangerous effect on eyes and sensitive skin.

Upstream in this tributary, man has aided his efforts or madness to the wonders of nature and we pondered why and marvelled how, many years ago he cut a narrow cleft through solid granite. This shaft was obviously constructed painstakingly for a definite purpose and must have represented many, many hours of back-breaking labour. Above this man-made miniature gorge, we traced a diversion channel for about half a mile, this was dug in deep sand obviously to divert water into the water race, but for what purpose?

Returning to our cars we pondered this man-made mystery, while admiring the unhurried works of nature in the form of *BANKSIA COLLINA* buds in all stages of development from bronze coloured pencils to candles just ready to burst into flame.

On the way to the falls we noticed some plants of *LOMATIA* with large sprays of white flowers held high above the attractive frond-like foliage and watched a White-necked Heron as it lazily flapped its wings just sufficiently to lift its long legs above the ground before gliding peacefully into the next swampy dinner table. White-throated tree creepers busily worked their way up the trunks of the trees and rainbow Lorikeets obviously had a welcome supply of food in the tree tops, so we joined in the mood and enjoyed our lunch, but

minus the frogs and the nectar of our fellow birds.

At various stages of post-lunch digestion, groups headed for vantage points to view the cascading waters as they rushed; plunged and spouted over the falls. As so often when viewing and appreciating spectacles of nature, a little further on, a little further down and a little further out always beckons, and following the pathfinders (literally so in places) and in various stages of technique and speed most of the party reached the bottom of the falls, to stand and admire. From a glassy lake to a rolling surf, from a meandering stream to a foaming waterfall, water has a fascination and as we leapt scrambled or crawled over and under the rocks, the one purpose was to find another vantage point to view the spectacle of water in action. While we delayed the inevitable upward "walk" we admired the large masses of *Hoya Australis* in heavy bud with an occasional wax like head of flowers giving promise of real beauty to come.

Now that the road into BoonooBoonoo is so much better (I still have very vivid memories of building stone crossings and digging cars out of bogs the first time we visited the area) it is possible to reach the falls after heavy rain. As we watched in awe the volume of water cascading down, we were glad we weren't deterred by the threatening weather.

*Busaria spinosa* made a splash of weeping white and if ever you doubt the appropriateness of the species name, just clutch one of these plants to negotiate a rocky scree.

The time had come to leave our world of rock and water and the upward journey had to be faced. The admitted rests, the stops for just one more photograph and the pauses, or were they excuses, to admire the shrubby deeper blue-flowered *Plectranthus* and the large yellow five petalled *Hibbertia* all combined to make the return trip one of interest, to compensate for those pounding hearts. At the steepest part, a pair of Currawongs, so appropriate in this type of environment, seemed to mock our efforts as they swooped effortlessly over the gorge.

Another pause, another cup of tea, some more photographs and a leisurely trip home, but only after some reluctant-to-leave members did a further excursion to rocky holes at the brink of the falls.

While gazing over the falls they suddenly realized that another set of eyes was looking too. Curled up on a thin branch in a good look-out position was a greenish-brown tree snake. They insist he was rapt in the view, but I suspect he was more interested in catching his tea.

To avoid the true but over used cliché "we returned home tired but happy", I will simply say it was an enjoyable visit to a very beautiful area and I trust the club will have many more equally satisfying excursions.

(Thank you Tom for such a comprehensive report.)

We print a letter the club received on the eve of a local person being fined to the tune of \$2,000 for the trapping of birds mainly finches and parrots in this our own district. News has it that another find is pending, and there are concerned people in this district who are sorry that this fellow has been fined, but are jubilant that at last definite and strong action has been

taken. Activities of some local trappers have been quietly observed and an alarming number of birds have left this district in the last few years. There are very few birds which are NOT protected and members could perhaps usefully read regular lists which are published.

The letter comes from Mr. J. Barber 38 Lilley Street Hendra. Q and we give his address because it includes a warm invitation to visit his aviaries in Brisbane. He is a member of the 'Avicultural Society of Queensland.

"It has been my intention, for some months past, to write to you. May I take this opportunity to invite you and your association to see my aviaries, and also may we exchange visits so that your friends can visit the aviaries of this society and that we may participate in your activities also.

We wish to dispel any old misleading prejudices which over the years have equated aviculturists with illegal dealers and smugglers. For many years a number of naturalists have formed an image which portrays us as fiends in long coats, with large pockets stuffed full of doped birds ready for smuggling. It is this image we wish to cast off, so that everyone will realize we are as concerned about conservation as they are.

I have taken the liberty to enclose copies of two circular letters we are currently distributing. Our Society is presently attempting to have mutual meetings with all conservation societies and clubs."

#### MARCH MEETING PROGRAMME.

Last month we had the privilege of seeing some outstanding and rare bird pictures, the work of Mr. Chris Cameron of Chinchilla. We thank him and his wife Mary and family for making the trip over to our district to present us with this programme, and are sorry that because of the pressing need of drought at home that they were unable to stay in the area for a day or two after such a long trip. Mr. Cameron joined a party of top bird photographers as part of the Bird Index Scheme, who visited Iron Range in far north Queensland. The trip was sponsored by the Bank of N.S.W. by \$7,000. There remain 30 species in that area still to be placed on photographic record, or there did before this expedition.

Many of the pictures taken including some of the ones shown to us are included in the recent fine and well regarded bird book production sponsored by Readers Digest. Of the 30 species they were seeking to photograph a good total of 18 species were portrayed on this expedition, many for the first time. The party worked with a will to get these pictures, and we felt honoured to see some of the results. Chris gave interesting accounts of how nets were used and other sophisticated equipment was used to obtain these pictures. Chris has some fine bird pictures to his credit. His wife Mary has also contributed in no small way to the increase of interest of natural history. She is well known for her artistic and accurate scientific drawings which illustrate a number of publications, and decorate the Queensland Museum, and is in demand for her work.