

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

P.O. BOX 154,
STANTHORPE, Q., 4380.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 1978/79

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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 - \$3.00
FAMILY \$4.00

AIMS OF THE CLUB

1. TO STUDY ALL BRANCHES OF NATURAL HISTORY.
2. PRESERVATION OF THE FLORA AND FAUNA OF QUEENSLAND.
3. ENCOURAGEMENT OF A SPIRIT OF PROTECTION TOWARDS NATIVE BIRDS, ANIMALS AND PLANTS.
4. TO ASSIST WHERE POSSIBLE IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.
5. TO PUBLISH A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER.

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MINUTES - MONTHLY MEETING WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27th, 1978.

Present 20; Apologies 7.

The President extended a welcome to all present.

Minutes - It was moved by Mr. R. McCosker and seconded by Mr. D. Pfrunder that the minutes as per the September magazine be taken as read. Carried.

Correspondence - Inward:- National Parks and Wildlife:- information brochures on Chillagoe, 1 press statement.

Magazines :- The Darling Downs Naturalist Vol.1 No. 2; N.P.A. News Vol. 48 No. 5; Warwick Walker Vol. 6 No. 2; Urimbirra (Aug. Sept.).

Outward was forwarded to:- 4 QS, Mr. L. Jeffrey, Australian Conservation Foundation re Habitat magazine.

It was moved by Mr. E. Walker and seconded by Mrs. D. McCosker that the inward be adopted and the outward endorsed. Carried.

Financial:- Mrs. D. Archer moved that the credit of \$78.17 be received and accounts for Postage September Magazine \$6.16 and C.W.A. Rent \$4.00 be passed for payment. Seconded by Mrs. J. Stevenson. Carried.

Outing Report:- Mrs. McCosker reported on the wildflower outing to the property of Mr. Salata on September 10th. Those who attended had a most enjoyable day amongst the variety of wildflowers in bloom. Slides of flowers seen were shown by Mr. R. McCosker.

The President presented a report on the monthly outing to Texas to which 30 members attended. Under the leadership of Mr. L. Jeffrey members were taken to places of interest in the Texas district. Once again the variety of wildflowers added to the interest and enjoyment of the day.

Next Outing - Place - Finneys Falls
Date - Sunday, October 22nd, 1978.
Leader - Mr. E. Walker

This will be a half day outing and members are asked to meet at Weeroona Park at 9.30 a.m. Members and friends are asked to bring their lunch.

Next Meeting - Date :- Wednesday, October 25th.

Guest Speakers - Mr. & Mrs. W.D. McKenzie

Topic :- Highlights of a trip to Kangaroo Island and the Flinders Ranges.

GENERAL BUSINESS -

Directions to the Canungra Campout on October 14th, 15th were made available at the meeting to those wishing to attend.

Final arrangements for the Camera Club Camp to Wallaroo Station were given by Mr. E. Walker.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.30 p.m. to be followed by an interesting slide programme on the European Alps presented by Mr. E. Walker.

Signed - Janet Hockings, Hon. Sec.

TEXAS OUTING REPORT - by Colin Hockings

We assembled at the Texas Post Office at 9.30 a.m. and were met there by our guide, Laurie Jeffrey. From Texas we drove south towards Atholwood stopping at Goatt Rock on the way.

Goatt Rock and its neighbouring outcrops of granite are scattered with fig trees showing similarities to the "Moreton Bay Fig". Another interesting aspect of this area was the profusion of Pandorea Creeper, all of which were in flower.

Proceeding South towards the McIntyre River, we stopped a couple of times at areas of interest where we observed Caladenia Orchids, Callatrix, Leptospermum and more Pandorea, all in flower.

Our lunch spot on the banks of the McIntyre River was delightful except for piles of litter discarded by previous visitors.

After lunch, members enjoyed the scenery and sunshine and spent sometime bird watching and chatting by the waters edge.

Monumental Rock presented a challenge to many members inducing them to make the short ascent. Even a dog and a goanna succeeded in scaling the last few tricky metres. Two interesting ground orchids were found here.

The last stop of the outing was made at Morrel Creek where the red Calliatemons promise a beautiful display during October.

New member, Doug. Binns, had a fruitful day searching for reptiles. His finds included a coral snake, red-naped snake, a rather uncommon goanna and various other lizards.

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FLOWER OF THE MONTH

SENECIO lautus by Dore McCosker

Against the wishes of other club members who derived as much pleasure from the prolific flowering of the Hardenbergia, I have chosen the humble Senecio lautus as the special flower for this month.

The plants have responded to the wet winter and the flowers are larger than usual, making the plants very conspicuous whether growing in rock crevices or by the roadside.

There are about 3,000 species of senecio mostly yellow flowered, found in most parts of the world. They include plants ranging from tender annuals, biennials, hardy herbaceous and tender succulent perennials as well as evergreen trees and shrubs and various climbers.

The colourful cinerarias currently splashing colour in pots and warmer gardens belong to this group as well as some of the "ghost bushes" - the ornamental silver leaved shrubs that add foliage interest in many gardens and floral arrangements.

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Mrs Dorothy Thouard has written a delightful and descriptive poem titled "Girraween". She has graciously given it to us to print in our Newsletter. I'm sure many of the sentiments she has described so vividly will be in tune with those thoughts and feelings often felt by our own members. Thank you Mrs. Thouard for sharing it with us all.

GIRRAWEEEN.

High up in the Granite Belt;

Where the air is cool and clean.
Nature has spread her grandure;
At a place called Girraween.

Rocky tors rise skywards;
Like Pyramids so high.
With granite boulders balancing;
Just how, you'd wonder why.

And way back in the Dream Time;
When black men first did roam.
Nature gathered great big rocks;
To make their King a Home.

They built this mighty Castle;
If you glance towards towards the sky.
Mount Norman has a needle;
Which, of course, must have an eye.

And then there are the Slip-rocks;
Standing so tall and grey.
Also an Aztec Temple;
Where Nature goes to pray.

In springtime there are blossoms;
Of many wildflowers bright.
And the ever flowing streamlets;
Tinkle day and night.

As o'er the rocks they ripple;
Until they do cascade.
Down those graceful waterfalls;
We know that God has made.

The beauty at the Junction;
Of those two creeks which flow.
From the mighty Castle rock;
And the Pyramids also.

Is grandure at its very best;
A most unusal sight.
Is that expanse of well worn stone;
In colours dark and light.

Mrs. Thouard's poem Continued:

Amongst the Apple orchards;
 And pastures that are green.
 Nestled in the ranges;
 Is that place called Girraween.

'Tis a place of peaceful beauty;
 With animals roaming free.
 And birds sing joyful music;
 Just for you and me.

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Notes on Water Rats by Jean Harsløtt.

Recently during a farm operation some six inch fibro pipes, which were adjacent to the creek were moved. Inadvertently a water rats nest was disturbed. This pair had chosen to make their nest inside one of the half dozen pipes lying there in the grass. Water-rats usually make a long burrow running parallel with the creek bank with an inner chamber which is about nine inches high, made of bark, twigs and grass. Also an outer chamber which seems to be used as a pantry. However in this case the six inch fibro pipe provided a ready made tunnel thus saving, nodoubt considerable effort in construction. The fact that it did not have the extra bit of height at the actual site could be overlooked in view of other great savings! In the nest so rudely up-ended, when their modern "burrow" was unwhittingly moved were five very young water rats(there must be a special word for the young of water rats, perhaps some of you can tell me) These young fellows still had their eyes closed and were about three inches long. They were soft grey in colour, had the general appearance of an ordinary rat, but were slightly more elongated with a more rounded looking head, mostly because of tiny ears, and their feet showed a suggestion of being webbed.

The genus of Australian Water Rats is Hydromys (what a lovely watery word!!). To quote "FURRED ANIMALS of AUSTRALIA, by Troughton, " The Australian water rats are of especial zoological interest because of their remarkable adaption for aquatic life has evolved almost entirely within Australia, thus providing a unique example of rodent specialization and also definite proof of an ancient rodent invasion of this continent. The large size of this genus with an average head and body length of twelve inches plus striking evidences of aquatic adaptation are seen in the streamlining of the long flattened head, with nostrils thrust forward, high set eyes, and small ears which scarcely project above the fur! Unlike the normal rat they have beautiful fur, short rich seal-like fur which is also indicative of a largely aquatic life.

They are clean in their living habits and not carriers of disease. They feed on mussels snails and crayfish. The difficult to open mussel shells are often found

Notes on Water rats Continued.

with not a mark on them, and many pondered on how they could possibly open them. After many years of observation because they are shy and largely nocturnal animals, it was found that they cleverly caught them and laid them in the sun for a while and of course the mussels opened themselves.

CANUNGRA CAMPOUT. Those of our members who are fortunate enough to join the Queensland Naturalist club to Muriel Curtis' property will I'm sure have a wonderful week-end. The late Ken Curtis and his wife Muriel who will be your hostess have a naturalist's paradise on their property, and have been astute observers of nature all their lives. The name of Curtis is synonymous with these areas and they were the pioneers of Albert River and Tamborine Mountain countryside and their names are to be found in many of the features. Mrs. Hilda Curtis of Tambourine Mountain now in her very vital eighties is one of the pioneers of Queensland nature study and nature photography and probably one of Australia's best known lady naturalists.

OCTOBER PROGRAMME.

For the October meeting we have the honour of having two very delightful and interesting people for our meeting, as guest speakers. Mr. McKenzie recently retired as art director for the Courier Mail and Sunday Mail. Each morning as you read your paper his layouts and suggestions made the experience more interesting and pleasant. Mrs. Mc.Kenzie is also a well known and capable artist in her own right. Both have been for many years members of the Queensland Naturalist Club being very active as executive members and a tower of strength to that organization, unstinting with their time and talents. Their home set by a small stream not far from the city has been a haven to friends and nature alike rare and unusual birds have nested there and many naturalists have gathered for wonderful yarns. Be sure to come along to what promises to be a 'beaut' programme.

Bird of the Month.

Since no notes have been provided for this sector, just a couple of bird observations from here.

The Magpie-lark or Peewit nesting in the garden are finding their mud nest building neighbours the Apostle birds very trying. Despite the fact that they both build rather similar round mud nests, or perhaps because of it, and because of the latter's habit of taking over the peewits' nest, they are unpopular. The Apostle birds seem to incessantly "drop -in" en masse on the peewits and cause considerable irritation.

The Coots have emerged from their observed nest and it's a surprise to see the offspring, so different from the parents, sporting red bills and a generous supply of ginger down on the head making them real "strawberry blondes"