

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB.

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

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 1978-1979.

PRESIDENT.
VICE PRESIDENTS

SECRETARY
TREASURER
NEWSLETTER EDITOR
NEWSLETTER SUB-COMMITTEE
PUBLICITY OFFICER
LIBRARIAN
FLORA OFFICER
FAUNA OFFICER
GEOLOGY OFFICER
YOUTH OFFICER.
BUSHWALKING OFFICER
COMMITTEE

COLIN HOCKINGS
TOM ARCHER
DON LIGHTFOOT.
JANET HOCKINGS.
DOT ARCHER.
JEAN HARSLETT.
AILEEN Mc. ALLISTER.
JOAN STEVENS N
MILLIE MARSDEN.
DORE Mc. COSKER.
DONAGH
MURRIC PASSMORE
ROBIN Mc. COSKER.
ERROL WALKER.
DON LIGHTFOOT.
DAVID PFRUNDER
TOM CHAPMAN.
JEAN HARSLETT.
FRANK WILKINSON

MEETINGS. - 4th. WEDNESDAY of each MONTH at C.W.A. ROOMS at 8 P.M.

OUTINGS. - Each SUNDAY PRECEDING the FOURTH WEDNESDAY of the Month.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS.

SINGLE - \$⁴3.00

FAMILY - \$⁶4.00

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.
- = = = = =

MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING WEDNESDAY 27th. JUNE 1979.Present 14Apologies 7

The President extended a welcome to all present.

MINUTES:- After an amendment to the June minutes... "that the Club contribute to the travelling expenses," rather than provide travelling expenses of guest speakers.

It was moved by Mrs. McAllister and seconded by Mrs. D. McCosker that the minutes as per the June magazine be taken as read and correct..... Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:-

INWARD:- 1. Australian Conservation Foundation (Save the Reef Fund.)

2. Urimbirra Vol. 13 No. 6

3. N.P.A. News Vol 49 No 3.

4. Habitat Australia.

OUTWARD:- 1. 4QS.

It was moved by Mrs Archer and seconded by Desley McDonagh That the inward be adopted and the outward endorsed.. Carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT.

Mrs. Archer moved that the credit of \$14.02 be received and that the following accounts be passed for payment

C.W.A. Rooms rent \$5.00

Rover Scouts \$6.00. Magazine copy.

Magazine Postage \$7.07.

Seconded by Mr. Lyle Thompson..... Carried.

NEXT OUTING. PLACE. Blue Gorge.

LEADER. Mr. Bill Goebel.

DATE. Sunday July 22nd.

MEETING PLACE:- 8.00am. PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF TIME.

WEEROONA PARK Some driving over rough roads is entailed, but members whose cars lack sufficient clearance, will be given the opportunity to leave their cars near the woolshed and continue as passengers in Bill Goebel's 4 wheel drive.

There will be a fair bit of walking time permitting and members are requested not to stray from the road in certain areas as dingo traps are set. A packed lunch and water will be required by all intending to walk.

NEXT MEETING: The Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday 25th July and members are asked to bring slides of "Remember Last Year". Could slides be left with Mrs. D. McCosker 58 Railway Street. Supper will be served and members are asked to bring contributions to the supper.

OUTING REPORT. Given by Robin McCosker and as written (See over)

GENERAL BUSINESS.

It was moved by Mr. Davies and seconded by Mr. Thompson, after some discussion, that due to rising costs the subscriptions will be increased to \$4 single and \$6.00 Family..... Carried.

It was moved by Mr. Lightfoot and seconded by Mr Archer that the request from A.C.F. to support, "The Save The Reef Fund" be left to individual members (reason note financial statement) Carried.

Mr. B. Mc. Donagh reported on a meeting at Girraween National Park, for Neighbours of the National Park, where feral pigs and other problems were discussed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00pm. The speaker for the evening, Mr. Brian Mc. Donagh gave an interesting programme, a talk on "Conservation".

Janet Hockings

Hon. Sec.

BIRD OF THE MONTH by MR. TOM CHAPMAN.
EASTERN SPINEBILL.... ACANTHORHYNCHUS TENUIROSTRIS.

During our outing on Sunday in June the most conspicuous bird was the elegantly attired, friendly little Eastern Spine-bill. Far from resenting our presence as so many honeyeaters do, when interrupted during their important task of frisking flowers, these friendly fellows seemed to actually welcome our presence.

They are particularly tame and inquisitive and are frequent visitors to gardens that offer a supply of food. Much to our delight, a tree outside our bedroom window is a favourite spot for a pair of Eastern Spinebills. We never tire of watching their acrobatics as they hover, dart, rise and plunge as they supplement their diet with a range of insects and things that crawl and fly.

Their long curved beaks are particularly adapted to many Australian plants such as Grevillias that other honeyeaters cannot handle, as well as introduced garden plants such as Fuchsias. However on this Sunday their lunch was readily available all along the creeks where the Banksia collinas offered the longest candle spikes I have seen and obviously provided a copious supply of nectar.

Identification is very often aided by a name "spinebill" and does readily identify this bird with its very exaggerated curved spine-like beak. One of its common names "Cobbler's Awl" is an interesting description but its scientific name really spells it out. "Acantha" is Greek for spine and "rhynchos" is for beak while "tenuis" is Latin for slender and "rostrum" for bill, thus both names stress the main feature of this little bird and its slender spine-like bill.

Incidentally the Western Spinebill (found only in Western Australia) has the same descriptive name indicating its spine-like bill, but its specific name is "superciliosus" referring to its conspicuous white brow that gives it a supercilious look, which so far I have only seen in a photo.

In addition to the "spine-bill", other means of identifying the Eastern Spinebill are the general appearance of splashes of grey-brown (body) cinnamon (collar) White (chin breast and tail feathers, the latter very conspicuous in flight. A chestnut patch in the centre of the breast and glossy black head. Eyes are red (bright), bill black, legs black-brown. An appropriate comment from me is that they are like Christmas decorations

Continued on Page 5.

Mc.COSKER PROPERTY AND ABORIGINAL WELL OUTING REPORT.By Robin Mc.Cosker. 24th. June 1979.

Although unscheduled until the last meeting about 25 members attended the outing to the caves and "aboriginal" well in the Girraween National Park. Access to this area was gained through Mrs. Dore Mc.Coskers property, and per kind permission of the Park Ranger.

The weather could not have been better for us, especially for a mid-winter outing. I'm sure all of us, except for the youngest Walker, unfortunately, were filled with a feeling of well-being as we hiked along the quiet bush track; the air was fresh and clean after the recent rains, many kinds of birds in song were flitting from branch to branch, and there were several wildflowers in full bloom. The most spectacular, was the Banksia collina, a very showy bush.

We followed Ramsay Creek upstream and paused where it splashes and gurgles over a steep granite face, gradually cutting its track deeper and widening the string of pools which have been formed in its watercourse. The track from there to the caves is a naturalists delight, as it varies from the cool dense shrubbery of the creek bank, to the drier open eucalyptus forest, to a cool ferny glade with an eucalyptus canopy high overhead, to finally the warm expanses of bare granite.

We left our packs here and climbed down to inspect the caves, after some time was spent in finding the entrance. A few hardy (?) members removed boots and socks to explore the depths, but were prevented from scrambling right through the caves by the flow of water. It was pleasing to see a large number of glow worms in the caves, but strangely, no bats. Seen in the clear waters, in the caves, were one small crayfish, one minnow, six pairs of frozen feet, the front part of someone's torch, and Tom Archers hat.

After lunch in that glorious sun warm sunshine, we set off for the well, and after much deliberation and searching found it, intact, and just as full of interest and mystery as ever, a truly fascinating feature of our Girraween Nat. Park.

On the return journey we split up and a small group explored the ridge to the north of the caves, while the remainder made their way slowly back along the creek. We hoped that this ridge would provide better views of the Sphinx, and although this was not to be, it gave Col Hockings the chance to show us that he really could have made it up Wellington Lookout. The next ridge to the east was quite close and from a vantage point there, we had quite a nice view of the Sphinx and Turtle Rock. It was time then to turn our heads towards the setting sun, and after a pleasant walk, downhill all the way we were back at the cars.

Some points may be of interest from the report of our last outing to this area on 22nd. November 1970 :- There were about 40 people present, a black snake was seen, there were glow-worms and bats in the cave.

I do hope all present enjoyed the outing and trust that we took the opportunity to observe some of nature's works

Robin's Outing Report Cont.:-
at first hand.

Robin Mc.Cosker.

Thank You ! Robin for a delightful outing and an interesting report. One of the values of these written report is the ability to look back and see changes in the activities of animal and plant patterns, and items which at the time may seem insignificant, often help to complete the jig-saw at a future date.

J.H.

NOTE ON GLOW WORMS by J.H.

Glow worms always have a special fascination and perhaps a certain amount of mystery about them. Indeed, little is known of their life history in Australia, and this no doubt is because they dwell in places which makes it rather difficult and uncomfortable to observe their private lives. "Glow worms" or "Fungus Gnats" or more formally Mycetophilidae family, occur in caves throughout Australia, more particularly in the cool parts of Australia. Many breed in fungi which flourish in the dark damp cave environment. They form groups of small hanging threads beaded with a viscid matter along them, which the larvae of the gnats move about in and apparently capture prey, which in turn has been attracted to the luminous properties, or character which they have. Just another of those remarkable features of nature, where one thing becomes an integral part of another's function, and yet another delicate balance of nature that man in his clumsiness can so easily upset.

BIRD of the MONTH Cont. from Page 3.

Eastern Spinebills normally breed from early spring to late Summer. The cup shaped nest is made of bark, grasses and moss, lined with feathers and other soft material and usually suspended and attached to the rim of the nest, from a horizontal branch, up to 15 metres from the ground.

Two or three buff coloured eggs with chestnut and dull purple spots at the larger end are laid.

The Eastern Spinebill's call is a succession of shrill prolonged piping notes, hard to describe, but quite a distinct and pleasant introduction to one of our friendliest birds.

Tom Chapman.

Returning the same day by myself from this walk, to keep another date I observed a Spinebill commencing on the construction of a nest with all the above characteristics, except that they had apparently been bluffed by the spring-like Winter we have been enjoying and perhaps the bountiful food supply with the prolific Banksia flowers. I hope they paid proper attention to that soft warm lining, in completion of the nest, for there are probably some cool nights ahead.

Jean Harslett.

MEETING PROGRAMME..... CONSERVATION by MR. BRIAN Mc. DONAGH.

Mr. Brian Mc Donagh as Guest Speaker had obviously thought a great deal about the subject, researched many points and gave us some very thought provoking material to chew over.

Brian defined clearly what conservation meant, noting how far it frequently it moved from its original meaning in these days of political lobbying. He spoke mainly of course of conservation as we view it to-day in relation to ecology, and in this field how it was impossible to try and pick anything out specifically by itself. The more one analysed, the more attached everything became.

He reviewed some interesting world experiments on controlled hunting to maintain the virility of herds, and usage of land by man through the ages, pointing out that of all animals, man is the only one to cultivate his environment, and its outcomes. He also spoke of some of the fine samples of saving species and of the mass destruction of the Passenger Pigeons who gave their lives at the rate of 18 train loads a week, for food and dollars and until it became the story of "The Passing of these Pigeons".

Brian also spoke of the problems of control of feral pigs in local National Parks, Forestry and other areas. Pigs are doing more and more damage in and out of Parks. He jokingly addressed his remarks to those which these areas are "Dear to some and those "Near to some" and though he comes under the category of "near to some" we all know of the interest and participation of the whole McDonagh family in National Parks.

Some figures of estimated pig population in this district, and the cost of eradicating pigs in such rugged terrain would I'm sure be a surprise to some. The alternative methods of eradication and danger to other animals and birds were reviewed, and I'm sure were rather concerning and sobering thoughts.

J.H.

LOCAL NATIONAL PARK ADDITIONS.

Our readers will be aware of the extensive additions in three areas in this district. These additions include some very attractive country, also the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Walsh, which will ultimately become the home of a Ranger for the Red Rock and Sundown areas. You will also have noticed the plea for information of these areas, so please help if you can. I'm sure the news is very rewarding to our members, and pleasing.

THANKS.

As the year draws to a close, and as editor of this monthly, I would like to thank those people involved with the Bulletin. Thank you to members who have made special and regular efforts in writing reports and articles, and in providing nature notes, which are very useful recorded in print. Thanks to Ian Jackson who takes it off, runs it off and runs it. Aileen McAllister who collates it, staples it, addresses it and posts it, and 'Hey Presto' it arrive in your home. In all, a very smooth operation, thanks to their reliability and willing efforts.

Jean Harslett.

WHERE HAVE THE ELDER BERRIES GONE ?

A correspondent writing in the Queenslander in Nov. 1898, says "Fine cherry and other fruit trees are planted in Stanthorpe, and Elder trees with their clumps of pretty white blossom grow beautifully around Stanthorpe. Wine is made by the Stanthorpe people from the small black and occasionally white berries. The elder is a very large shrub or small tree. Have you got one in your garden ?