



THE
**GRANITE BELT
NATURALIST**



Monthly Newsletter of the
Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club



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No. 11. November 1970.

P.O. Box 154 S'tpe

Report on Field Outing.

The combined outing to Jolly's Falls with the Toowoomba Naturalist Club on Sunday 25th October proved a very rewarding and interesting day, especially for the botanists among us. Introductions were made at the Park, name tags were given out and general directions for the trip were outlined.

We travelled along the Amiens road, turned right at the Bapaume turn off, carried on to Passchendale and right again at the cross roads at Pozieres. We then passed through the Zanatta's gate and followed a track which led to Donnelly's Castle the highest point at Pozieres from which the Summit can be seen in the distance.

After a very interesting time there we travelled along a back road which brought us out at Jolly's Falls. There we linked up with a few people from the Brisbane Naturalist Club, who had also decided to join us for the day.

Lunch time was enhanced by discussions on many topics before we set off walking along a narrow track on the left hand side of the creek. The wild flowers were fully out and looking magnificent after the recent rain.

After exploring the area we met back at the top of the falls for afternoon tea. We were thanked by Mrs. Grey who is a keen botanist. The day was enjoyed by all the clubs.

Plant Notes - Jolly's Falls.

The Jolly's Falls area, the rendezvous for lunch and the joint wanderings of the Stanthorpe and Toowoomba Naturalist Clubs provided a great display of wild flowers. It was described as a 'treasure trove' by one Toowoomba member. Some apologies were conveyed by Mrs. Grey from Mr. Coleman, the president of Toowoomba, unable to attend because of ill health. It came as a great shock to all our members to hear so shortly afterwards of the sudden and untimely death of Mr. Coleman. Without a doubt all members enjoyed this excellent day, amongst such a good display of wild flowers, will associate the visit with Toowoomba members and will feel sympathy for them in the loss of their president.

Pausing first at Donnelly's Castle botanical highlights were, the tall growing, sparse flowering *Zieria smithii*. This robust fern is probably *Var arborescens*. Several subtropical trees were noted, cloistered and protected by huge granite boulders, the additional warmth probably accounting for their existence.

A splendid example, in full bloom, of the Leafless Climbing Orchid, *Galeola cassythoides* was found. These orchids climb tree trunks and rocks by means of short sucker-like aerial roots. Over 70 species are found from Japan to Malaya but only two endemic to Australia. The second species also

Plant notes cont'd

found in Eastern Qld. and New South Wales is probably the tallest orchid in the world. Mrs. Hilda Curtis found one on Tamborine Mt. 44 feet high. Unfortunately the advance of settlement and consequent destruction of thousands of acres of forest have gone towards the extinction of this plant.

At Jolly's Falls, the Boronias, Calythrix and Micromyrtus, provided massed effects. Two species of boronias *B. granitica* and *B. repanda* rub shoulders in this area, the latter species, more often than others have a bush with white flowers instead of usual pink. The low growing boronias found in the grass *B. polygalifolia* was also noted. Many other species of plants were examined and discussed, Mr. David Hockings of Brisbane providing very useful and up to date information. Native Hops, *Dodonaea hisuta* one of the most handsome were colouring up for a great display.

A sample of *Tetratheca thymifolia* was found, an interesting low growing mat like plant, with vivid purple flowers. This is a species which is becoming much less abundant because it grows where good apple orchard soil is found.

Clematis cascaded from many trees seen enroute and was in full bloom. This broad leaved species is *Clematis aristata*. A close inspection of the flower reveals no petals, but four long narrow sepals, which could be mistaken for petals. The seeds are equally beautiful, silver silky 'beards'. When the flowers die the styles do not fall off with the sepals and stamens instead they remain attached to the baby seeds, grow larger and create this lovely seen effect and later 'fluff' off in the breeze to scatter seed far and wide.

Mrs. Bill McCosker thoughtfully brought a few of the rarer species of wild flowers from the southern end of the district for the benefit of the Toowoomba visitors.

Jean Harslett.

Bird List from Donnelly's Castle and Jolly's Falls.

Birds were very active at Donnelly's Castle and probably a whole day spent there would have been rewarding, however time was limited as we had to proceed to Jolly's Falls for lunch. Very few birds were seen here, the middle of the day is not the best time for bird observing. We were a large party and recent rains had caused the creek to flow strongly so that the birds were not forced to congregate at small water holes.

The following birds were observed during the day:-

Crow
Pied Butcher Bird
Brown Flycatcher
Rufous Whistler
Dollar Bird
Eastern Rosella
Magpie
Grey Thrush

Noisy Friarbird
Wattlebird
Tree Creeper
Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike
White-throated Warbler
White-eared Honeyeater
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Blue Wren

Bird Notes cont'd

A member in the Banders car observed a White Falcon along the road to Donelley's Castle. This was a very exciting observation/ Another member is certain she saw a Seagull. It is not uncommon to see Gull far inland during flood conditions or after wild weather along the coast. Hundreds of them were seen recently in the Riverina area of N.S.W. We would be interested to hear of any sightings in the area.

The listing of the Dollar Bird proves that spring is well under way as these birds are migrants moving south during September-October and retreating north again in March to spend the winter in the islands to the north of Australia. The white dollar patches on the wings can be seen clearly as the bird swoops and rolls in the air above water, hawking for insects, this rolling flight accounts for its other name Broad-billed Roller. The harsh discordant cry is mainly uttered in flight and is very characteristic, once heard it is seldom forgotten. It is Australia's only representative of the family Coraciidae - Rollers, which is best developed in the African region.

REPORT OF MONTHLY MEETING.

About 45 members and friends attended our monthly meeting held on October 28th in the C.W.A. rooms. The secretary reported that three newsletters from other Naturalist Clubs had been received. It was noted that Mr. Curtis would be available for a future lecture and Mr. P. Grant was to be written to as soon as possible regarding a lecture on February, 24th, subject "Gulls". The president said that in future we should try not to change our advertised programme without a very good reason and that we should work in closer liason with other clubs before we made a long term plan of outings.

Two members reported on the combined N.P.A. - R.A.C.Q. outing to Giraween on 10th October. They met many members of the N.P.A. but were sorry the R.A.C.Q. were unable to attend.

A further request for material for the monthly newsletter was made by the president.

Mr. Hamlyn-Harris read some rules and regulations of the Youth Hostel movement and it was decided to leave the committee to discuss the possibility of our club joining as a group.

Slides by Mr. I. Simcocks and Mrs. J. Harslett taken on a previous outing to Cunningham's Gap were shown. Mrs. J. Harslett then showed some of her beautiful slides on Native Plants. All these were much enjoyed and the programme was artistically and interestingly presented

PROGRAMME.

Field Outings.

<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Leader</u>
McCosker's Area	22nd Nov.	Robin McCosker
Killarney Falls Area	3rd Jan. 1971	Brian Dodd
Dr. Roberts Waterhole	21st Feb. 1971	W. Cathcart & E. Walker.

PROGRAMME cont'd

Meetings at C.W.A. Rooms 8 p.m.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Stars	25th Nov.	Mr. E. McCulloch
National Parks	27th Jan. 1971	Mr. T. Ryan and Mr. B. Goebel
Galls	24th Feb. 1971	Mr. P. Grant

Additions to list of Financial Members.

Mrs. Nixon
Mr. Noel Butler
Mrs. McNiven
G. Banks

Note Any errors or omissions to this, or previous lists please inform editor or treasurer. Also if you are on the list but do not receive your magazine.

CONTRIBUTIONS

A Trip to Ayers Rock.

It was with a measure of excitement that we boarded our bus at the Territory Motel, on the banks of the Todd River, (which was very dry, we were told the water was sixty feet down) and proceeded towards Heavitree Gap in the Macdonnell Ranges. Already, though early in the morning, this glowed in various shades of pink.

Through the gap lay the Alice Springs Aerodrome. Here there was a slight delay as the Flying Doctor took off on some errand of mercy. The 'Mantle of Safety' dream of Flynn of the Inland which came true, (he made it come true).

Our party took off at intervals in several small planes. We numbered eight, left last and were contained in a nice new twin engined craft which covered the 280 miles to arrive at the rock about the same time as the others. We flew over red ridged country, sparsely dotted with small bush and generally with bare red tops to the ridges.

We had to skirt Pine Gap Tracking Station at a respectful distance as it centred a prohibited area. To the south of us, stretching hundreds of miles away towards the west, could be seen a great string of Salt Lakes. They appeared to be dry and we were told that we were flying over the Amadeus Basin, an area of oil search; drillers had gone through 12 feet of salt in one of the lakes only a few weeks before.

Mount Connor, a great flat topped tor, now appeared, and under us could be seen the Finke River, with a pool visible only occasionally. River gums followed each other along the river, and several other dry watercourses had their share of these wanderers, only a few of them however dared to venture away from the winding sandy stream beds.

A Trip to Ayers Rock cont'd

In the distance now the fantastic red rock appeared. Known to the aborigines as 'Ulura' it is the largest single rock in the world, -the rock we had travelled all the way from Stanthorpe to see! It towers 1100 feet above the plain and is $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles in circumference, and together with Mt. Connor and Mt. Olga is part of the second oldest range of mountains in Central Australia; actually they are the only surviving remnants of this range.

The Olgas, due west of Ayers Rock, seventeen miles away sprawl over an area of about 4 miles by 3 miles dominated by Mt. Olga which is 1800 feet above the plain.

Ayers Rock rapidly approached us and our pilot flew most of its length on the South side, banked and flew across it and we landed on the northern side, it took us longer to do this than for you to read about it, so we were able to take several snapshots.

On landing, the mass of the Rock then made its impression on us again. After a short bus trip to the Kiosk, where we had a pleasant cup of tea etc. we again joined the bus and journeyed several miles to the western end of the Rock, discovering there some tourist buses and private cars, this being the point at which climbers began their 'attack'.

The rock could also 'attack' apparently, as a notice informed the public that the climb was 'difficult and dangerous' and several fatalities had occurred previously so we were advised to follow the track marked.

Frank Wilkinson.

It has been suggested by one of our members that our club might well benefit by joining the Youth Hostel Association of Queensland as a group. As we have a hostel near Stanthorpe the idea is to be discussed by our committee at the next meeting.

By way of introduction we here print a few words about the Huntingdon Hostel published by the Queensland Hosteller in 1969.

HUNTINGDON HOSTEL- STANTHORPE

Huntingdon is a country holiday-makers paradise, for not only is it a quiet "out of this world haven" but provides access to the many attractions of the surrounding district. For hikers, horse-riders and cyclists there are quiet roads through orchards, bush and some of the ruggedest country in S.E. Queensland. For athletes there are swimming holes (including an Olympic Pool in town) open stretches of water and high hills. For artists and poets there are breath-taking landscapes, soft pastel colourings of eucalypt and wattle and a mystery ever challenging in the age old granite formations. For nature lovers there are wild flowers, native animals, trees and birds. For rock hunters, there are gems - both precious and semi-precious, formed in rocks, loose in creek beds and in the sand heaps of the abandoned tin-workings, scattered about the district.

Huntingdon Hostel - Stanthorpe cont'd

For the "in betweens" there are soft beds of grassy banks for lazing in the sun. The best of the abandoned mines is off a back road behind Glen Aplin, 3 miles from the hostel. Sand and gravel deposited here, some 20 feet high by 100 yards long is a source of topaz, clear quartz crystal, and obsidian. The tin "hole", deep in places, and part filled with water is a natural bushgirt swimming hole. Beyond, is the old steam engine, rusty, stripped and useless, which provided power for the workings.

Other district attractions include the Girraween National Park on the road to Wyberba. Here are gigantic rock formations on tumbled granite hills, natural platypus pools, wild habitats of the Superb Lyre-bird and naked nosed wombat and wild flowers. Donnelly's Castle west of the Summit, the crest of which - with escarpments resembling the turrets of an ancient fortress, provides an all embracing view of the district, enhanced in spring by a magnificent display of pink and white orchard blossoms.

Maryland River a few miles further along the Mt. Lindsay Highway runs through a shaded world of sandy reaches, wattles and river gums. Grassy swards nurtured by floods provide soft, attractive picnic spots.

The Gold Fields in the trap rock country beyond Amiens which has been abandoned for years. Numerous shafts, extended over many acres, are mostly water filled and soft edged but are interesting relics of the past. Mullock heaps around the sites still yield gold which is also panned from the creeks.

The Caves near Stanthorpe is a natural corridor through massive boulders with a perfectly round balancing rock over the entrance, where the bush ranger, Thunderbolt, lay hidden many times from mounted troopers.

Bald Faced Rock which ascends gradually, devoid of all vegetation, to a considerable height behind the Caves and allows a complete view over Stanthorpe.

StormKing Dam is the town's main water supply, provides scenic grandeur, ideal picnicing, swimming, waterskiing and yields traces of wolfram and small crystal formations in the rocks.

The Gorge located in The State Forest at Paschendale is an area of creek, crystal clear which runs through steep sloping walls of granite. Topaz is found here in the many sinks which dot the banks below the walls. Stately Pine trees encroach closely on either side.

Lastly is the Severn River with its tributaries, the Quart-Pot and the Broadwater where the many swimming and picnic spots are often abandoned tin holes with the mullock heaps promising crystal and topaz.

By kind permission of the author,
Geoffrey Hamlyn-Harris

IMPORTANT. Field Outing to McCosker's Area (Wyberba)
Sunday November 22nd.
Leader - Robin McCosker
Assembly Point - Park 9.30 a.m.
First Stop - Bill McCosker's Property Wyberba,
then to explore an interesting and less well-
known area of the Girraween National Park.

As we go, by way of a bubbling mountain stream, our first objectives will be where it disappears underground through a tumble of rocks, forming natural caves. Keen speleologists who don't mind getting dirty and wet may negotiate these caves with the aid of torches, to emerge through a small hole in the dry creek bed some distance away. The less adventurous may explore the first section of this cave system.

After lunch in the shady, gorge below the cave entrance, we will move on to inspect a natural spring which is possibly connected with aboriginal occupation since its mud wall, and water level are about three feet above the surrounding ground. The springs water level has never been known to drop and hence is an oasis for bush animals in the drought.

On the return journey, though we are not on the banks of the Nile, we may pretend we are in Egypt when, from one vantage point, both Pyramids and the Sphinx can be viewed overlooking the grandeur of the Granite Belt scenery. As well, the bush should provide a varied display of wildflowers, including many of those shown by Jean Harslett at the last meeting. This walk should provide something of interest for all sections of the club, BRING your cameras and wear suitable clothing especially rubber soled shoes, as for other granite belt walks, and don't forget we will be carrying lunch.

Your leader,
Robin McCosker.

P.S.

Christmas Bar/B/Q 13th December, 1970

Owing to the fact that Scott Wilmot is out of town at present, we shall now hold the Christmas Barbecue for members and friends at THE JUNCTION on December 13th. Please bring your own "goodies" to cook, be they steaks, sausages or some other delicacy and whatever else you may fancy to "pep" them up a bit.

The main party will leave Stanthorpe park at 2 p.m. hopeful of a little walking or swimming before the great "cook-up" begins at about 5.p.m. Should you desire to forego the pre-cook pleasures please join us at 5 p.m. at the Junction. THE JUNCTION referred to in this notice is located before arriving at the main Bar/B/Q area at Girraween Park so a NATS sign will be erected near the roadside showing the spot at which you turn off the Girraween Road.

Hoping to meet you all there.

Editor.

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