

10 MAY 1989

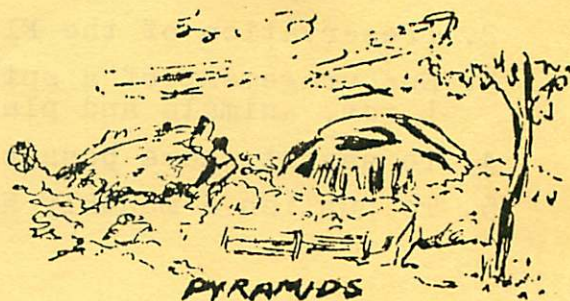
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THE  
**GRANITE BELT  
NATURALIST**



Monthly Newsletter of the  
Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club



Registered by Australia Post - Publication No. **QBH 1824**

PRICE 40c



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

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

OFFICERS OF CLUB FOR 1988 - 1989

PRESIDENT	RAY MARSDEN (811 593)
VICE-PRESIDENTS	ROBIN MC COSKER JEAN HARSLETT B.E.M. DORE MC COSKER
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YOUTH OFFICER	ROBIN MC COSKER
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HON. AUDITOR	JOAN FERRIS

MEETINGS - 4th WEDNESDAY of each month in the Q.C.W.A. Rooms  
at 8 p.m.

OUTINGS - The Sunday PRECEDING the 4th Wednesday of the month

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Single \$6.00                      Family \$10.00  
Rent donation per family per meeting

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 general monthly meeting of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalists Club held in the QCWA rooms Victoria Street Stanthorpe  
On Wednesday April 26, 1989 at 8pm.

Present 23

Apologies 5

Opening. President Ray Marsden opened the meeting and welcomed all present, in particular the guest speaker Mr. Rolly Hill and his son David.

Minutes. Moved by Rob McCosker and seconded by Jean Harslett that the March meeting minutes be accepted as read in the April Newsletter and confirmed. Carried.

Correspondence. Inward received from  
1. letter and booklet from Soil and Water Conservation  
2. John Walter re newsletter  
3. Richmond Valley Naturalists Club Inc.  
4. Toowoomba Bushwalkers Club Footprint  
5. Darling Downs Naturalist  
6. Chinchilla Field Naturalists Inc. 'Urimbirra'.  
Outward forwarded to 4QS re outing and meeting notices  
Moved Mary Walters seconded Lyle Thompson that the inward correspondence be received and the outward be endorsed. Carried.

Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Julia Brown presented her report which shows a credit balance of \$242.07 as at 26/4/89. She moved that her report be received and the following accounts be passed for payment - Room rent \$8.00; May Magazine postage \$17.00; Duplication \$6.00. This was seconded by Esme Lacey. Carried.

Outing Report. Leader Errol Walker reported that, in spite of the weather, 27 people turned up at The Haven. It was very wet underfoot and quite rainy during the day. Bird life was prolific. During the day a solar electric fence was observed; feral cats seen and the proposed campsite inspected. After lunch the party went out to the western part of the property and were shown a one person operated sawmill, which was most interesting. Orchids were seen, many fungi and a small snake. Tom Archer gave a demo on how to cross a creek when you find yourself on side. Sunday was Millie's birthday and all wished her a happy birthday in spite of the rain. M. Marsden moved that a letter of thanks be forwarded to Judy and Ian Reed The Haven for their wonderful hospitality. Errol was thanked for his leadership on the outing, it was a most interesting area and Errol had provided a well rounded group of activities.

May Outing.

The May outing is to be to the Sugarloaf area with leader Val White. Val reported that she had done some pre-outing work but the weather conditions have been against her. She mentioned bora rings, chinese diggings old grave sites and long gone building sites. Meet at Weeroona Park at 9.30am on Sunday May 21 for this outing. Lunch will be at the cars.

May Meeting Programme.

The guest speaker for the May 24 meeting will be Colin Hockings on a subject to be announced.

Specimens.

Rene Thompson brought along some opal which she had found at Diamond Vale and some unusual shaped fern fronds.

General Business.

As a copy of the Stanthorpe Field Naturalists is not forwarded to the Toowoomba Bushwalkers Club the secretary was instructed to write to them to see if they have access to a copy or if they would like to have one forwarded each month. As stencils are getting very hard to procure, Jean Harslett moved that we try to secure two boxes now from Granite News Books and Stationery as they have some on special. This was seconded by Mary Walters. Carried.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

After Meeting Speaker.

President Ray introduced the guest speaker Rolly Hill who took us via his slide show to Mt. Isa. He gave an inside look into how the geologists work to get their information on rocks and minerals. As he was involved in making maps of the mineral deposits for the federal government, he showed these and how to read them. He also had on hand a few rock specimens which were most interesting. Member Brian McDonagh moved a vote of thanks to the speaker which was carried with acclamation.

Dot Archer.  
Hon. Sec.

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Bird Life in the Archer's Garden

We are continuing to have quite a flock of Rainbow Lorikeets to visit us several times daily - enjoying the seed and splashing around in the birdbath. Several paid a visit to the bread and honey trays and were not in the least disturbed by the bees there. These jolly bee come for an easy load of honey much to the disgust of some of the other birds. As well as the scaly breasted lorikeets, some newies are as Tom calls them 'Greenies' which he says he hasn't seen for years.

It is also a great thrill to see numerous small birds - firetail blue wrens and bartail finchs to name just a few, put ing in an appearance at the seed feeder on the edge of the native garden. With the protection of the native garden (Tom's pride and joy) it is wonderful to have the smaller birds return.

OUTING REPORT TO THE HAVEN

Sunday 23rd April 1989.

By Leader Errol Walker.

This outing was proposed as a campout but, possibly due to the weather pattern recently, I received only one certainty for the overnight stay by Thursday night 20-4-89.

As it turned out, it did rain at Bald Rock on Saturday and Sunday so we would have had a wet camp to pack up.

Sunday morning dawned overcast in Stanthorpe as we headed out early to put the 'NATS' signs, it then started to rain and mist lightly. 27 people attended the outing, earlycomers saw the magnificent view of Bald Rock from the Haven homestead and that was the only clear view we had all day. Occasionally we had spectacular views to the rock with low mist adding to its intrigue. 22 of the 27 attending the outing, set off south from the homestead along a high partly cleared ridge parallel to Boundary Creek Swamp and the Mt. Lindsay highway. The song of many varieties of birds was evident as we pushed through the damp high grass and bracken. We climbed through several fences and, at one point, saw several kangaroos.

Light misty rain didn't prevent us enjoying views to the west or the incredibly heavy flowering of the banksias. We crossed Boundary Creek Swamp via a causeway where a few of us inspected a new installation of a solar powered electric fence. (It must have been working on its reputation on that wet Sunday). Properties in this area are without commercial electricity.

Heading north along the western side of the swamp and back towards The Haven, it was soon obvious that our damp feet were about to become very wet feet. There was more than just a few centimetres of water across the swampy ground feeding the main creek.

We disturbed a family of wild cats which had made their home under some overhanging granite boulders. Otherwise the walk was wet but uneventful. The site of our rain cancelled camp was visited, which was situated adjacent to a freely flowing watercourse containing some waterholes and attractive rapids. Tom Archer found himself on the wrong side of the creek but soon corrected his ways by dropping large slabs of granite one after the other and recrossed by the stepping stones, much to the cheers of his audience.

Dinner split up our party with the wetter ones enjoying an open fire in The Haven's lounge room and the rest finding shelter in the sheds and varied places around the house.

At 1pm, Judy Reed the property owner, escorted us in 4WD and some of our own conventional vehicles to a unique example of pioneering life. We watched in amazement as Judy set about, singlehanded to saw through a large log to cut a 3x2 plank. A portable sawmill which has to be seen to be believed, has supplied all the timber for their building needs.

A look around some huge boulders covered in orchids and an encounter with a small snake, filled in an interesting hour adjacent to the mill. Ray Marsden was seen to be photographing some colourful fungi before we left this area which we believe contains koalas.

Our next stop on the way home was a single stand shearing shed where Judy's husband Ian, demonstrated shearing. We even learnt a lot about the art of wool classing. To most of us it was a worthwhile learning experience.



## April Outing(continued)

The rain was falling heavier than ever as we all thanked Ian and Judy Reed for their hospitality and generosity. The cool damp conditions of the outing did not dampen the fellowship of our club. Probably when we recall the highlights of our trip in the future, we won't even think of the wet feet and the mountain mist and rain which was with us most of the day.

(Did you know that it was Millie's birthday? What a way to spend your birthday Millie!)

Errol Walker.

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ELEPHANT SAFARI IN ROYAL CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK.

By Ruth and John Walter.

On our recent overseas trip we spent a few days in Royal Chitwan National Park, Nepal. Chitwan is situated in the southern lowlands of Nepal, called the Terai, close to the Indian border and about 120km from the capital Kathmandu. Royal Chitwan was established in 1962 as a Rhinoceros Preserve By the present monarch's father, but was not gazetted until 1973. It consists of floodplain jungle and elephant grass, it covers an area of 932 sq. km. and is about 150m above sea level.

Our arrival was by car from Kathmandu via the country's No. 1 highway, which winds in an alarming way through the mountains, with hairpin bends and sheer drops into the Tsiuli river. The Indian trucks drive all over the road, pushing everything in their path out of the way.

Once out of the mountains, we entered the fertile plains of the Terai, which are the best farming areas in Nepal having a good water supply from the Rapti and Narayani rivers. The farmers in the area can get up to three crops per year such as sugarcane, rice, wheat, jute, tobacco, beans and lentils. After getting lost in a maze of paddyfields we eventually found our way to the bank of the Narayani river and our dugout, which took us across to the other bank to await a pick up by landrover. While we waited we were invited to inspect last night's tiger footprints in the sand. After arrival at our tented camp "Temple Tiger" we were quickly taken on a walk in the jungle to view what birds we could before dark. On enquiring about the danger of the roaming tigers, we were told, "Yes tigers did roam in that area but usually at night and anyway sloth bears are more dangerous". I might add we met up with neither while walking for which we were very grateful.

At the evening meal, our program was mapped out - elephant safaris, jungle walks, swamp viewing, a dugout trip down the river, more elephant rides etc.

With the help of the resident naturalist, who like us, is a dedicated bird watcher, we were able to notch up about 100 species in a very short time. Some of the more exciting birds were the wood-peckers, Barbets, and hornbills - all species not found in Australia.

Royal Chitwan National Park Safari.(continued).

Bird watching from elephant back can be an excitin, if a somewhat bruising, experience with the lurching of the elephant, the 24 foot high elephant grass to peer through, the bombax trees with their huge spines, which the elephant just happens to brush past. It is surprising the amount of ground they can cover in a short time, with such an ambling gait, they are good for seeing some of the other animals because of the viewers elevation. Good views were had of rhinoceros we were surprised to see how different they were from the ones we had seen, only a few weeks before, in Africa. The Asian rhino, apart from the sinle horn, looks like an armour-plated tank with squared off plates covering its body. Also from atop the elephant we saw spotted and hog deer, civet cat, wild boar but no tigers. We did, however, get to see two Chitwan maneaters in a natural setting at the Kings Forest, Gorkana.

One of the highlights was a day trip by dugout, downstream on the Narayani river. We were a bit unfortunate in picking the day when the notorious hot south wind out of India, known as the "Loo" made it's seasonal appearance. It is like a hot north wind in Victoria in mid-summer, only worse!! The blowing sand off the river banks made for a photographer's nightmare, as it was like puting your lens in front of a sandblast machine. However we did get excellent views of Brahminy or Ruddy Shellducks, relatives of our own Burdekin and Mountain ducks.

We had lunch on the river bank out of the wind and it was most pleasant. Lunch was delivered to us by elephant and was set out on the sand with banana leaves as a tablecloth. During lunch we were given a half hour impromptu lecture on the biology and habits of the Indian elephants, with an elephant strutting her stuff at our feet as we lay on the sand. The Nepali elephant drivers(as they call them) do most of their commands verbally, unlike their Indian counterparts, who seem to make a lot of use of a spiked metal bar to jab their charge around the head.

We were to witness a rather startling event when the manager of "Temple Tiger" hunter a peasant squatter from his grass leanto, on the park side of the river and promptly set fire to the hut and set adrift a second dugout. He explained later to us that these drastic measures were necessary to stop illegal fishing and poisoning of the waterholes.

After a very lazy lunch and rest in the shade, we mounted our trusty elephants and headed for camp via the grassed river route.

All too soon we had to leave for the mountains and the hassles of cancelled planes and so on. We would recommend Temple Tiger Wildlife Camp. It is in a new area and not yet widely known as Tiger Tops or Gaida, facilities are basic but adequate, and being new, personal attention is assured. Anyone going to Nepal and wanting to try Temple Tiger should contact Spring Hill Travel, Brisbane or write direct to Temple Tiger Wildlife Camp, PO Box 1173, Kantipath, Kathmandu, Nepal.

(Thanks very much for this most interesting article. Ed.)

An appeal for help from John Walter, 9 Hill St., Pittsworth.

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I wonder if you might be able to find space in your newsletter for an appeal for help.

Recently my wife and I spent some time at Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary in Rajasthan, India. In the short time we were there we saw over 100 species including the rare (and becoming more rare) Siberian Crane. This was achieved largely because of the knowledge and help of one of the rickshaw men. This man was so helpful to us that we, in turn, wish to help him. Like most people in country India he and his family live a hand to mouth existence and, although he farms a small plot of land (or rather his wife and children do), his only outside income is what he earns carting tourists along in his rickshaw to see the birds. We, of course, gave him a tip, but would dearly like to reward him further by giving him a pair of binoculars. This, on the surface, would seem a simple matter. We could not leave him the ones we were using as we were going on to Kashmir, Nepal and Thailand. Nor could we buy him a pair as they are next to unobtainable in India. We thought to post a pair but that is also impossible owing to the complete unreliability of the Indian post.

My appeal is this, if any of your readers are going to India in the next few months I would be grateful if they would be prepared to take a pair of binoculars with them to give to our rickshaw man.

Could they please contact me at the above address or on 076 93 1487?

Yours sincerely,  
John Walter.

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### May Outing.

Meet at Weeroona Park at 9.30am on May 21. Leader is Val White who will take the group on a trip to Sugarloaf when much of the history of the area will be relayed to members, old graves visited, a bora ring or two will be seen and many other things of interest. This is definitely one not to be missed.

Lunch will be eaten at the cars.

### May Program.

Colin Hockings has entitled his program, which will be seen at the Q.C.W.A. rooms at 8pm on May 24, "Holidays at Evans Heads." This will be an excellent program as Colin is an expert with the camera and has the ability to search out the unusual.