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THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST



Monthly Newsletter of the
Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club

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 and post it to members.

Meetings:

Outings:

Subscriptions:

Rent :

Address:

4th Wednesday of each Month at QCWA Rooms at 8.00pm.
The Sunday preceding the 4th Wednesday of each Month.
Single \$8.00 Family \$15.00 per annum July to June.
Donation per family per meeting.
Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club Inc., P.O. Box 154, Stanthorpe Q
4380.

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB FOR 1993-94

President	Rob McCosker	83 5371
Vice-Presidents	Kris Carnell	83 5268
	Mary Walters	83 5306
Secretary	Margaret Carnell	83 5268
Treasurer	Roger Logan	81 2493
Newsletter Editor	Geoff Walker	81 2008
Newsletter Sub-Committee	Julie Beddow & Patience James	
Publicity Officer	Patience James	81 1853
Librarian	Trish McCosker	83 5371
Management Committee	President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer.	

SCALE OF DIFFICULTY FOR WALKS ON NATS OUTINGS

1. Flat walking, road or track.
2. Road or track gentle hills.
3. Track, some hilly sections.
4. Track, some steep sections.
5. Cross country easy open forest, gentle slopes.
6. Track, steep section common, with steps.
7. Cross country some hills, some thick undergrowth.
8. Cross country steep section with scrambles over rocks etc.
Some thick undergrowth.
9. Cross country, steep, hilly, rough, thick undergrowth.
10. Mountain climbing, hard going, higher level of fitness or plenty of time required.

STATE FOREST CAMPING CODE

Camping In State Forest Parks will be more enjoyable for you and other visitors if you observe this simple camping code.

- All plants and animals are protected - please don't disturb or damage them.
 - Keep your camp clean and tidy and respect your surroundings. At the end of your stay, make sure the site is tidy for those who follow.
 - Tables and fireplaces are for all to use - please don't monopolise them.
- Leave waterfront areas clear for everyone - pitch your tent well back from the creek bank.
- Light your fire only in the fireplaces provided. Use firewood sparingly.
- Be sure your fire is out before leaving.
- Avoid polluting creeks and lakes with soap, detergents or shampoo. Draw water in containers for washing purposes and dispose of used water well away from the stream.
 - Be aware of plants and creatures that might make your stay uncomfortable for example, leeches, ticks and nettle.
 - Don't leave clothing or footwear out on the ground overnight - biting insects, spiders or centipedes may crawl in. Always knock out your shoes before putting them on.
 - Take care when swimming in creeks and waterholes - before entering the water check for depth, snags or other obstructions.
 - If you go bushwalking, always let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
 - Camping is limited to two weeks. If you wish to stay for a longer period, please contact the local Forestry Office.

This code applies to most places where Nats. go on outings.

Outing Report, Pindari Dam 23/10/94

Twenty-eight people set out for Pindari Dam on Sunday 23rd, travelling towards Tenterfield and turning on to the Bruxner Highway. There were quite a number of White Cedars in bloom around Mingoola, as well as some Silky Oaks. We noticed herds of cattle grazing in the long paddock, and some very bare sheep paddocks. Farmers were haymaking and there was some very lush lucerne along the Mole River. Many properties have old tobacco barns near the homesteads, some of which are made from logs. I'm always amazed to see these still standing, as it would have been so easy for them to burn down when the tobacco was being cured. I guess the people using them must have really known what they were doing.

We drove in to Bonshaw to have morning tea in the park, and made use of the school toilets as there were none in the park. The only person available to ask for permission was an extremely friendly wolf hound, who didn't seem to mind at all. There were two birds sitting on nests in the school grounds - a Peewee and an Apostle Bird, and numerous birds in the trees along the creek, including, Red-rumped Parrots, Rainbow Lorikeets and Friar Birds. We saw flocks of Sulphur crested Cockatoos, Quarriors and Galahs along the road as well as Ibis and Pee Wees.

On arrival at Pindari Dam we discovered access was restricted, to the wall of the dam as the dam is being enlarged. The height of the wall is being increased by 40 metres, to a new height of 85 metres. This will increase the capacity of the dam from 37500 ML to 312000 ML. The purpose of enlarging the dam is to improve the security of irrigation supplies to the NSW IRRIGATORS ON THE Border Rivers system.

While we were at the wall we saw Pelicans circling and three kites which we think were Whistling Kites. They appeared to be playing in the air. As we couldn't see the water from the lookout we drove back and followed a dirt road for some kilometres to the old picnic area. There was not much water to be seen there either, but there were Pelicans, Stilts, Cormorants and Ducks on the water and flats.

After lunch most of us climbed up to the new lookout and the wall, which everyone found very interesting. From the heights we saw Swallows, Spiny Cheeked Honeyeaters, White Plumed Honeyeaters and perhaps a New Holland Honeyeater. There was also a very large Robin in a Kurrajong tree photographing a very pretty mistletoe flower. The only mammals sighted, apart from domestic ones were a rabbit, a wallaby and a grey kangaroo.

We headed towards Emmaville where we intended to have afternoon tea, but by the time we arrived it was teeming with rain, so we continued towards Deepwater. I think some people felt like getting out of the cars to get wet as it would be such an unusual experience. We noticed a lot of old mine workings beside the road near Emmaville with "Danger" signs on them, and quite a lot of shrubs which would be covered in flowers in a good season. The flowers we saw were Leptospermum (Teatree), Hibbertia (Guinea Flower), Wahlenbergia (Bluebell), Mistletoe, and Swainsona (Darling Pea).

As the rain had stopped at Deepwater we had afternoon tea in spite of a very cool breeze. Three boys on goat buggies drove to the corner near the park, so Kris and Millie went hurrying with cameras at the ready. Two of the goats were too impatient and set off at a spanking pace, but the third one stood to be photographed. A group of people at Deepwater practise every weekend, and were preparing for races in Grafton on 30th October. To turn your goat you have to stop, get off the buggy and pull the goat in the right direction. They tend to run in a straight line.

After playing on the see saws for a few minutes we headed for home after an interesting and enjoyable outing. Many thanks to those who took their cars and drove the considerable distance we travelled.

Margaret & Kris Carnell

BIRD LIST OUTING TO PINDARI DAM

Galah	Willie Wagtail	Magpie
Robin Redbreast	Swallow	Quarrion
Sulphur Crested Cockatoo	Ibis	Peewee
Kestrel	King Parrot	Red Rumped Parrot
Crow	Rainbow Lorikeet	Pelican
Friar bird	Apostle Bird	Wedgetail Eagle
Pied Butcherbird	Richard's Pippit	Kookaburra
Sparrow	Eastern Rosella	Chough
Starling	Whistling Kite?	Currawong
Yellow Robin	Superb Blue Wren	
Black Faced Cuckoo Shrike		Spiny Cheeked Honeyeater
Ground Lark	Yellow Rumped Thornbill	Striated Thornbill
Grey Crowned Babbler	White Plumed Honeyeater	Pied Stilt
Black Cormorant	Duck (unidentified sp.)	Spur Winged Plover
Bronzewing Pigeon		

November Outing

The November 20th outing will be to Bare Rock in the Main Range National Park. The walk will involve an ascent of Mt Cordeaux (the northern peak) from Cunningham's Gap and then along the northern ridge to Morgan's Lookout and Bare Rock. The initial climb to the first lookout (about 10min) is the steepest part of the whole walk. Along this stretch, there are a few dozen steps to scale. The track is then a gentle uphill walk to the southern flank of the Mt Cordeaux summit. (grade 3) The walk so far will have been almost entirely through rainforest. A feature of the southern side of Mt Cordeaux is the old gold mine which can easily be entered and explored.

The track next reaches the stunning lookout below the summit of Mt Cordeaux. If luck is with us, the giant spear lilies may still be flowering. The track then skirts the western flank of Mt Cordeaux and continues onto Morgan's Lookout and Bare Rock, a return trip of about 6km along a well-made track. (Grade 2) Bare Rock should provide a breath-taking view of the Goomburra Ramparts. The afternoon light will provide interesting shadows down the ridges of the escarpment. (Weather permitting, of course.)

For the more adventurous, a side trip to the top of Mt Cordeaux maybe more of a challenge. The route would be about grade 8-9, with a particularly steep rock scramble about 5-6m high. If some one could bring a rope, it may provide some extra security for those who may wish to try it.

Departure time will be 8 a.m. from Weeroona Park for the Stanthorpe members. We will all meet again at Jackie Howe Park in Warwick and leave from there at 9 a.m. Jackie Howe Park is on the north side of Warwick, on the left hand side of the road, just before the bridge over the railway line.

Walkers will need to carry their lunch and water. Walk distance is about 12km.

To keep the night as short as possible , since we all had a long drive home , especially those members from Warwick it was decided not to hold a business meeting . The only business was a brief report on the last outing , to Pindari Dam , led by Kris and Margaret Carnell , and a report on next months outing by David Wilson . This will be on the 20th November to Mt. Cordeaux at Cunningham's Gap , leaving Weeroona Park at 8.00am to meet the Warwick members at the Jackie Howe Park at 9.00am .

Upon reaching the meeting venue members were greeted by the melodic calls of the Superb Lyrebird from a recording made by Bill Goebel . It seemed a shame to turn it off to introduce our speaker for the night , Margaret Brown , Interpretation Officer for the National Park . Margaret began by giving us some interesting statistics - When the Goss government took office it had an aim to increase National Parks from 2% to 4% of the State , and the current area is 5,845,000 ha which represents 3.5% . This is commendable however staffing levels have not kept pace . The Parks protect 15 different regions such as our Granite belt , Brigalow , Reef , Rainforest etc. Within these regions there is 67% of the 783 ecosystems found in the State , preserved , which is very high by world standards .

Margaret outlined some of the work carried out in Girraween which included , apart from the usual track maintenance etc , the construction of an enclosure to exclude animals so that a comparison of plant species and density could be made with an unfenced area . Other studies are being carried out at several fire monitoring sites throughout the Park . Observations which were begun in 1990-91 record the effect on flora of different types of fires , ie cool or hot.

Once the subject of fire was brought up Margaret gave a very detailed description of the recent extensive fire through the Park . This was started by a lightning strike near Castle Rock and was reported by visitors on Saturday 2nd - at that stage smoke was not visible from the Headquarters. It was thought the fire could be contained by fire breaks within the Park , however with the very dry conditions and wind reports of 60 and 100km/h , a wildfire developed which jumped 1.5km over two firebreaks . Campers were asked to leave on Tuesday and the park was closed to visitors . At 10pm that night the fire crossed the border into the Bald Rock National Park . To contain the fire , which at one place crossed an area previously burned in February this year , back burning was carried out throughout the remaining week resulting in the burning of about 8000 ha of the 11399 ha National Park .

After a lengthy discussion about the fire Margaret asked members to take part in an interesting activity which it was hoped would make people think about the many aspects of fire. First a list was drawn up of 14 advantages and disadvantages or positive and negative aspects of fire in the Park . Members were then split into four groups of about eight and each group asked to place the list items in a diamond ranking from most important to least important . These were then written on butchers paper and displayed for comparison . The result of all this was a remarkable similarity of the four sheets - we Nats members must all think alike !

All present thought the night was informative and interesting and the effort put into the presentation by Margaret was greatly appreciated .

FIRE!!

As most of you know the Stanthorpe district was subject to severe bush fires in late September and early October this year. These fires have generated considerable debate as to the best way to protect houses and property from the ensuing damage. Even though we were away on holidays when our property was burnt out and our house threatened, I believe it could be helpful to other Nats members to relate what happened and what lessons were learnt.

Our house block (170 acres) has always had problems with bush fires because we back onto a large area of mainly uninhabited rough country which has no north/south fire breaks either natural or man made. The normal fire control method over the years has been to control burn the mountain at the rear of our property on a regular basis in conjunction with our neighbours. This was not done this year as we have been in drought since the mountain was burnt about four years ago, and the vegetation cover had thinned out to an alarming level. Instead in August we control burnt a strip about 50 metres wide across our property just behind the house and orchard.

The threat to our house and the damage to the second orchard, which had no fire break was caused by the extreme conditions on the day. The fire had been burning in inaccessible country for two days and was being closely watched. At about 11 a.m. a very strong wind started and the fire quickly moved into the tops of the trees. Because of the severe drought and hard winter most trees had lots of dead leaves and the crown fire moved very quickly and jumped large distances. On our property the fire jumped over our house and into the orchard, a distance of about 300 metres, and there are reliable reports of the fire jumping 1 km from the top of Mt Dillon. Luckily there were no house lost and no one was injured even though there were some very dangerous situations.

Lessons to be learnt:

If you are going away make sure someone who lives close by knows what to do in the event of fire. In our case no-one knew that there was an electric pump on our house tank.

Be careful what you mulch your garden with near the house. Our Grevellia bed had been mulched with straw and burnt out completely. I wonder whether using an inert material such as quartz chips might be better, especially in a native garden.

A balance has to be found between having trees for a wind break and creating a fire hazard. Cypress trees are a danger as they burn readily and carry the fire into the crown of bigger trees. In our case we intend to clear corridors through the windbreak to lessen the impact of a crown fire, without losing the windbreak effect.

Using cattle to keep the grass down doesn't always give you a fire break. Our orchard, which suffered considerable damage was next to a paddock which had been stocked reasonably heavily for a number of years. However, there was a build up of leaves, bark and small branches etc. which burnt very readily.

Beware if you have a timbered area down hill from your house. Fire increases greatly in intensity when travelling uphill. We had apricot trees burnt about seventy metres into the orchard because of the uphill fire.

Be careful where you put your woodheap. There were two instances of wood heaps burning. In one case 6 tons of iron bark caught alight at night and the first anyone knew about it was when they got up in the morning and found a huge heap of coals not far from their kitchen door.

It is no over until its out. After the initial fire the breaks must be checked for a considerable time. Two weeks after the fire a gum stump in the back yard caught up and started spreading sparks over the dead leaves blown off after the fire.

Finally, we are very thankful that the damage to our property was not greater.

The Rural Fires Division in both Queensland and New South Wales, and the Forest Service of the D.P.I. have brochures on reducing fire risk.

Kris Cornell

Learning for Pleasure

As the year is coming to a close we wish to thank everyone for their help and support. It has been a very enjoyable and instructive year. Special thanks go to Ailsa and Frank Wilkinson, Jocelyn Bonner, Jean Chauvel and Jeanne Kuenstner for providing us with the pleasant venues where we held our activities. Nothing is nicer than meeting in the warm and welcoming home of friends.

Ancient History, French, Italian and Current Affairs will break after the November sessions. They will resume in February.

The success of the above sessions encourages us to start a new subject, namely Ecology. We hope this will be of interest to new members.

Anyone wishing to introduce a new subject in which they are interested please let us know. Do not feel deterred or shy because we all contribute to each session.

If you have any queries please contact Mary Walters on 83 5306.

Christmas Break-up

11th December at Mary Walters



Meet at 5pm for a bush walk then back to the house for a BBQ. If you have a portable BBQ please bring it. However a BBQ will be provided.

How to get there?

1. Via Glen Aplin. Turn off the New England Highway at Glen Aplin Service Station on to Mount Sterling Road. Cross over the railway line, turn left and go over the bridge. Take the first turn right on to Thorndale Road for 5.3kms. Turn left on to Hoey Lane. 300 metres up Hoey Lane turn left on to a metal drive-way.

2. Via Texas Road. Turn left on to Thorndale Road and drive for 4.6kms to cross roads. Turn left (still on Thorndale Rd.) for .9km and turn up Hoey Lane and turn right on to Hoey Lane. 300 metres up Hoey Lane turn left on to a metal drive-way.

Look forward to seeing you all there.



Notice of Management Committee Meeting

Would Committee Members please note a meeting is to be held at 7.30pm 23rd November at the residence of Rob McCosker.

That is prior to the next Monthly Meeting

This will be the last club magazine until February '95.

For any further details on Field Nats activities keep a close eye on the Border Post or get in touch with our ever helpful Club President.