

THE GRANITE BELT NATURALIST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

OF

THE STANTHORPE FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

P.O. Box 154

Stanthorpe, Q., 4380.

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MEETINGS - 4th Wednesday of each Month in the C.W.A. Rooms at 8 p.m.

OUTINGS - Each Sunday PRECEDING the 4th Wednesday.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Single \$2.00

Family \$3.00

PROGRAMMEAPRIL OUTING

Place - Aztec Temple Area Date - April 24th Leader - Jean Harslett
Leave Weeroona Park at 9.30 a.m.

NEXT MEETING - April 27th in the C.W.A. Rooms at 8 p.m.

Guest Speaker - Ian Jackson who will take us on a visit to the
"Flinders Ranges"

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MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING - 23/3/77

25 present - Apologies - 16.

The President welcomed members and friends to the meeting.

Members expressed regret at the passing of fellow member - Mr. John Verri by observing one minutes silence.

April, 1977

MINUTES CONTINUED -

Minutes - That the minutes be taken as read per March Magazine was moved by Mrs. M. Marsden and seconded by A. Lomas. Carried.

Corresp.- Inward was received from: Dept. Lands Forestry, Nat. Parks & Wildlife - 4 press releases; magazines from Warwick Walker Vol. 4 No.8, NPA Vol.49 No. 2, D.Downs Nats Mch & Apr.; Urimbirra Vol. 11 No. 3, Down Under Vol.16 No. 1.

Outward was forwarded to Mr. Aderman, 4 QS, Adult. Educ. Moved by D. Pfrunder and Seconded by Mrs. McDonald that the Inward be received and the outward endorsed. Carried.

Financial - Mrs. D. Archer moved that credit balance of \$84.32 be received and a/cs to Rover Scouts \$3., PMG \$15. be passed for payment. Seconded T.Jackson Carried.

Outing Report - Mr. Tom Plant gave a brief outline of the history of the property we visited. All were very fascinated with the log cabin and relics of the past. Members walked to different parts of the property to look-outs, waterholes and wildflower areas.

Next Outing- This has not been finalised to date but will be full of interest.

Next Guest Speaker - Mr. Ian Jackson has kindly agreed to take us to the "Flinders Ranges".

Business - The extension to Girraween National Park in the Ballandean area was discussed and a map showing park area was on view. We are delighted to have this area and hopes for its extension are still held.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45 p.m. After which Miss Merle Tonkin showed slides and commented on her very interesting holiday to England, Canada & U.S.A. Thanks Merle.

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APRIL OUTING TO THE AZTEC TEMPLE AREA

Our next outing on April 24th is to the Aztec Temple Area under the capable leadership of Jean Harslett. We'll be meeting at Weeroona Park and leaving in a convoy at 9.30 a.m. It is planned to go in at the northern end of Mt. Norman at Girraween not from the Wallangarra end. It is possible this way to drive up to a creek area and those not wishing to do the more strenuous walk can have an enjoyable time looking around this section.

SO

COME

ONE AND ALL -

and enjoy yet another outing which I'm sure will prove to be not only interesting but a very happy one too.

We'll be leaving at 9.30 a.m. from Weeroona Park on

April 24th - SEE YOU ALL THERE!!!

April, 1977.

FOSTER PARENTS IN THE BIRD WORLD by Irene Chapman.

Since we took up residence at Glen Niven several months ago we have noticed two Blue Wrens, one male and one female continuously in the vicinity of the house. This is fairly unusual I believe and is certainly the first time I have observed a male wren without a 'harem' of several females and various immature youngsters in tow. Possibly this is a young couple just setting up home.

Their efforts to increase the tribe seem to be doomed to failure, however, as a few weeks ago I noticed that they had a much larger bird for company. Closer investigation revealed a very hungry and determined baby Fantailed Cuckoo. The poor foster parents were themselves to shadows catering to his ever increasing appetite but nothing seemed to still his constant squeaking for attention.

I was quite surprised that a bird as large as a Fantailed Cuckoo should parasitize the tiny Blue Wren however on consulting Cayley's 'What Bird is That?' I found that this cuckoo favours those species which build domed nests near the ground (which the Blue Wren does). Over 50 different species have been recorded as foster parents.

I recall now seeing an adult Fantailed Cuckoo in the area several weeks prior to the above incident. No doubt she was the culprit who began the unfortunate affair.

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BIRD DISTRIBUTION IN EXOTIC PINE PLANTATIONS - by Maurice Passmore.

The latest issue of "Australian Forestry" Vol. 39, No. 4. has a very interesting study on Bird Life in a large South Australian plantation south of Adelaide. As the author B.C. Gepp points out there are two widely held opinions about exotic pine forests which are quite untrue being that

- (1) there is little habitat diversity in a plantation
- (2) pine forests are devoid of fauna.

The first assumption overlooks the range of ages, site qualities, thinnings and unplanted areas that occur in a large area of plantations. Whilst the second is not correct although the relative abundance of different species is altered.

The study sited is valuable in that it separates the diverse conditions that are to be found and examines the bird population of each both on the edges and the interior of each block.

The principal sub divisions sited are

- (1) Young plantations or new plantings where grass and other ground cover is common.
- (2) Unthinned areas with a closed canopy and little ground cover.
- (3) Middle aged thinned stands where the canopy is much more open and native vegetation has reestablished itself.
- (4) Old Mature stands where the canopy is quite open and the ground cover well established.
- (5) Unplanted or failed areas e.g. dams, firebreaks, swamps and dry ridges.
- (6) Native forest.

Of all these only the unthinned areas showed a decline in the number of bird species observed notably in the interior of compartments.

In the young plantations small ground frequenting birds (such as finches) were very much at home whilst in the older areas the abundance of seed favoured Rosellas and Black Cockatoos. However many of the birds, whilst appreciating the cover in the plantations, were unable to find suitable nesting sites especially where they require "holes."

Bird distribution in Exotic Pine Plantations continued:-

These observations have been confirmed by other observers in various areas and it would appear that it is only those dense unthinned areas that the birds shun. However it also shows the importance of leaving some areas uncleared, such as along creeks, rocky outcrops, swamps and other such odd corners many of which are either unplantable or difficult to work anyhow.

Overall our Qld. forests conform to this pattern and it would appear that the plantations effect on our bird life is far less severe than that inflicted upon them by our farmers, graziers and above all developers.

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Last Months Outing to "Uncle Tom's Cabin" on Tom Plants property gave us a "Day to Remember" and the following are reports first by Chrissie Plant telling us about a little of what was seen there and followed by 'happenings in the past' by Uncle Tom himself.

Chrissie tells us - Nats members paid a visit to Uncle Tom's Cabin on Tom Plants property and for those who were interested in items of the past there was a collection of family relics which included - a smokers cap; a cadging pipe; a sunshade from Queen Victoria's era; a suit made for Tom Plant by his mother for the First Ambulance Ball in Stanthorpe when he was dressed as Lord Nelson and he got first prize; also soap - A Golden Guinea bar made just from Olive Oil and at least 30 years old.

And from Uncle Tom -

I will try and give you a bit of a run down on the history of the paddock. The first I remember of this area was Chris and I coming to a place around about where the wire gate is now. We travelled by horse and sulky and went to a place owned by a Mr. Southey. I remember his daughter, a girl of about 16 but with a shingle short, saying "my father is building a Closet".

My father eventually bought the paddock off Jack Marshall and we came along Cannon Creek Road and through Sheahans paddock and across the creek by horse and sulky. I built the hut about 1929 carting the material - rocks and cypress logs and stringy bark posts by slide pulled by "Cobber" a small black Shetland Pony; the mud mortar was also carried the same way. During the war dredges mined the creek where we used to shoot rabbits years ago. The land each side of the paddock is owned by the Forestry Dept. One paddock known as Dareeys, about 500 acres, has a big water hole and the whole paddock is one mass of blossoms when the wattle is out. The other side about 900 acres, runs to Applethorpe on one side and to Passmores on the other side. In our paddock there are a great variety of wild flowers - around one big rock at the top are about 20 varieties.

Many things come to mind when you get to be my age - you could write a book.

When we used to ride out and come to where the wire gate is now, we had to get permission from Old Jones to go through the place. He used to preach in the main street on Sunday nights. He and Mr. Arthur had a sawmill at this spot. Old Jones was supposed to have about four wives - while old Arthur did most of the work. When old Bull Allen was alive he used to say "Have you found the old still where old Bourke used to make moonshine?" I've never come across the remains yet. Doug Gow once asked me if I'd found the wolfram seam up the paddock. He said that Old Jim Baker knew where it was. I met old Jim at the Show once and he said that it was at the foot of a pine tree. There are millions of pine trees in the paddock so I haven't found the wolfram mine either. One time I rode out and found a board with a charcoal message written on it which said "I was lost and found the hut, thanks for the sardines." The searchers found him next day

Uncle Tom continues:- on his way back to the Summit. Nowadays we find our young friends from the city who grew up with our kids like to come up for Easter and not only themselves but bring their friends and children. They rig up the old bush showers for the women and have a ton of fun fossicking etc. Everyone writes their names on the walls in charcoal and the old place is running out of space so we've started a visitors book. Well it looks like I'm running out of space so I'd better finish off now, but I would like to thank you all for being so enthusiastic about the old hut, the bush and the old junk etc. and so glad you have enjoyed your day. thanking you and signing off.

"Uncle Tom"

Another story concerns Mrs. Rogers, who is here today from Brisbane with her sister Mrs. Hammond. Years ago Bon and my sister Chris put on some of my old clothes, old long trousers tied up with string. They blackened their faces and went down the paddock to where Dad was working. He didn't recognise them when they asked for a job.

That should be enough twaddle for today. By now - - - "U. T."

Our Publicity Officer, Ailsa Wilkinson writes of "This day to Remember" --

Chrissie had morning tea to welcome our club on our arrival. After a lovely walk down to the waterhole we returned to the Cabin for lunch. Chrissie had cooked steakettes on a barbeque made by using a large slab of granite. With salads and a cup of tea this was a meal enjoyed by all. Tom Spiller supplied a bag of apples.

Walking to the top of the "Hill" after lunch to view the scenery we were caught in a shower of rain - but this didn't spoil our enjoyment however we appreciated the welcoming sight of a splendid log fire on our return to the Cabin and found that Chrissie had also prepared afternoon tea with cream cakes, biscuits etc. for us.

After a chat around the fire and at the King's table and Captain's table we were ready to depart. We all joined in with the Plant family and sang "Now is the Hour" and "Auld Lang Syne". President Tom thanked the Plant family for having us and three rousing cheers were given. Thus ended "A Day to Remember".

Ed. Note -

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" is in a beautiful bush setting which truly must be lovely when the wild flowers are in full bloom. The Cabin is made of a foundation of Rocks and the walls are of logs. A huge open fire place is in the lounge and a wood stove is in the kitchen area which I'm sure keeps even the bedrooms cosy.

Tom has many signs around and two that appealed to me were the "Gossipers Corner" for the ladies and another which read "This corner reserved for fishermen and other liars".

Besides the family relics mentioned by Chrissie, Tom has quite a museum of old vehicles and farm machinery etc. outside - well worth a look at when you visit this delightful spot.

Many thanks again Tom for inviting us to visit with you and we look forward to coming again to see the wild flowers in all their beauty.

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Sometimes we're never less alone than when alone we seem
For oh! what store of golden days come flooding back in dream!
And what a host of friends await when we let memory hold the gate!

