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October 1998



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COMING EVENTS

OCTOBER

6	General Meeting	John Alberton	"Re-introducing small mammals to burnt areas"
11	Biodiversity Group Excursion	Forrest-Gellibrand	
13	Plant Group Meeting		Discussion on plants from last excursion
16,17,18	WVFNCA Campout	Warmambool	
18	Excursion	Anglesea Heathland	Leaders: Winston Huggins Margaret MacDonald
21	Biodiversity Group	+ Workshop Meeting	"Ponds and Swamps"
27	Bird Group Meeting	Barry Kentish	"The Red-footed Boobies of N.Keeling Is"

NOVEMBER

1,2,3	Campout	Hattah Lakes N.P.	Leader: Dave King
3	General Meeting	Prof. Neil Archbold	"Brachiopods"
8	Biodiversity Group Excursion	+ Inverleigh/Bannockburn	More details next month
10	Plant Group Meeting		TBA
16	Excursion	Lower Barwon River lakes	Leaders: Barry Lingham Graeme Tribe
24	Bird Group Meeting	Simon Kennedy	"Changing birdlife at Moyston"
25	Biodiversity Group	Workshop Meeting	

* CHANGES TO PROGRAM
+ ADDITIONS TO PROGRAM

CAMPOUT NOTICE

... *Dave King*

Hattah/Kulkyne National Park
Oct. 31 - Nov. 1-3

This campout will be situated at the Mournpall Camping Area on Lake Mournpall. Limited drinking water is available under normal circumstances. Being transported, it therefore depends upon total usage which may be great when a high number of campers use the facility. You are advised to bring a supply of drinking water. Lake water is suitable for washing purposes. Toilets are available. Site fees are \$8-30/day/vehicle, up to 6 occupants.

The Mournpall Track (see map on page 15) leading to the camping site is an all weather track so no problem with trailers. The area is provided with a wide choice of sites and has ample trees for shelter, although one should avoid the larger River Red Gums due to their tendency to drop limbs. Tables and fireplaces are available; for fires, fallen timber around the camping ground can be scarce, so bring an LPG stove if possible.

Supplies are available from the store at Hattah, including all fuels, ice, groceries, meats etc. and showers. Open 7 day/week. Orders will be taken P.N. (050) 293250.

For those who do not anticipate camping, Ouyen 34k from Hattah, has a good hotel, the Victoria, P.N. (03) 50921550, \$20 single, \$30 double, \$40 family, having excellent Chinese cuisine. Also Ouyan caravan park has cabins & on-site vans P.N. (050) 921426, and there are Ouyen Motel P.N. (03)50921397, Mallee View Motel P.N. (03) 50922197 and Hilltop Motel P.N. (03) 50921410.

The campout itinerary will be subject to the prevailing weather. It will include visits to several areas close by, typical of the Mallee and include some of the lakes in the vicinity. Lake Konardin, within walking distance of the camp, is particularly well populated with wader species. Spot-lighting is proposed, so bring lamps and torches.

□

REEDY LAKE SURVEY

... *Trevor Pescott*

The next excursion to Reedy Lake is due on Thursday Oct 8.

As usual, meet at the end of Fitzgerald's Road, off Melaluka Road, Leopold at 9.00 am.

For other details:
 phone 5243 4368.

□

BONESEED EXCURSION

... *Rob Beardsley*

Sat 24th and Sun 25th October.

With the football season now behind us and the cricket season some way off, the interim season has been declared - BONESEED!

Please note that the above dates are not mentioned in the coming events of our annual program.

Please consider helping out as attendance has not been that great in the past few years.

It is encouraging to note that we have been able to keep the area cleared free of new infestation, but to expand that area has proved difficult due to the few prepared to help.

Where: The Saddle, You Yangs State Park. Please identify yourselves at the park office in order to obtain free entry and directions to our work area if you are unfamiliar with the location.

Time: 9.00 am Saturday 24th.
 10.00 am Sunday 25th.

Bring: Gloves, eye protection ie. safety glasses or wrap around type sun-glasses, warm /wet wear and lunch.

Contact: Rob Beardsley on 5241 1951 or 0418534075.

□

Tonight's speaker ...

See page 11 for details.

□

EXCURSION NOTICE

The leaders will meet you at the Bowling Club car park which is opposite the main Anglesea shopping centre car park (on the Geelong side of the river) at 9.45 am. No other information is available.
 - Ed.

□

A RIVER STREAM FLOW SEMINAR — FREE

... *Dick Southcombe*

Victoria's rivers are under unprecedented pressure. Environment Victoria Inc., of which GFNC is a member, has established **StreamFLOW Network** to provide Victorians with a clear understanding of the issues, an opportunity to discuss river ecology and environmental flows and to mobilise support for our rivers.

The seminar for our region will be held at Ballarat on Saturday 24th October. Contact Freya Merrick at Environment Victoria, phone 03 9348 9044. to register for the free seminar or to receive ongoing information.

□

VFNCA SPRING CAMPOUT AT WARRNAMBOOL

... *Dick Southcombe*

Information sheets are available tonight for those who have forgotten to book or now find they are free on 16-18 October.

See page 1 of last month's *Geelong Naturalist*.

□

New members ...

We are pleased to welcome

Dr John Aberton
 (our speaker tonight)
 and

Mrs Veronica Mahoney

who joined the club in
 September.

OCTOBER

... Joe Hubbard

Country Distractions; Stock-Route Flowering; And Also.**Country Distractions.**

You can't believe all you read in some tourist guides and often you wonder if you are at the same place. On a day of following on antique shops/historic villages trail, the only real highlights were provided by nature, at no cost!

Watching a small flock of beautiful Superb Parrots feeding by the roadside was a real treat, that is, until they were spooked into flight by a passing raptor.

Further on we met two Australian Wood Ducks and admired their determined, and in our eyes plucky, defence of their nine ducklings.

We had stopped to allow safe passage of the male and ducklings in line across the narrow, country road when he decided the car was a threat so he charged at it with feathers raised and beak open.

Having put the car in its place, he returned to the ducklings which had squatted, motionless during the attack and led them off into the long roadside grass. Instead of leaving them in peace I went for the camera, close to hand of course, in the boot.

While this was going on the ducks and ducklings were almost invisible in the grass, frozen. The adults crouched low, with flattened bodies and necks hugging the ground.

Suddenly my presence became too much. The parents broke cover with flapping wings and flopped around seemingly in great distress - the old distraction display trick.

It did not end there. When we started to move off the male landed on the road a few metres in front and continued the distraction display, broken wing trick and all that, until we had travelled at very slow pace mind you, for about fifty metres. Then it flew off in a big circle back to its 'saved' family.

Bottom Lines.

- Wood Ducks are goose-like grazers, with brown heads and palish bodies.
- Look for them around farm dams or similar fresh water situations.
- Spring nesting is in tree hollows. Look for a combination of trees with water close by.
- Marvel how the newly hatched ducklings freefall to earth to be led off to the relative safety of open water.
- Location of Wood Duck story - near Cudel, N.S.W. Superb Parrots near Cargo, N.S.W. and Coolamon, N.S.W.

Stock-Route Flowering.

We found ourselves ankle deep in one of the best native grasslands I have ever seen. We had stopped because of the yellow which was made up of a combination of everlastings, Bulbine Lilies and Yam daisies. Here and there the yellowness was interrupted with the white of daisies and the rosy-purple and mauves of Swainson Peas. Beneath the taller plants grew tiny yellow-centred white everlastings and an even smaller scrambling plant with white bell-like flowers. The colours and combinations seemed to go on and on. It was then the Ranger arrived with his four wheel drive tracking through the grassland. It seemed incongruous but there it was!

After introductions he told of his recent interest in this grassland, the rarities it contained and his responsibility for its management. Being part of a regularly used stock route this must be difficult. He is currently meeting with a botanist who has somewhat differing ideas about management which is probably a good thing.

On his suggestion we walked further into the grassland and were treated to a brilliant display of Swainson Peas, their colours taking over from the yellows - breathtaking stuff!

I am glad we told him what a valuable thing he was looking after. I forgot to add fragile and vulnerable, I hope he knows.

Bottom Lines.

- We have one Swainsona in our area *Swainsona lessertifolia*, the Coast or Purple Pea. It is locally abundant on our dune systems. Watch for its bright purple pea-like flowers. It flowers from August to January but now is a good time to look.
- Take a trip to one of our grasslands. Try the railway reserves north of Bannockburn or travel via Shelford to take the Mt Mercer Road where good roadside vegetation exits.
- The Ranger in question, Norman Robinson is responsible for travelling stock, rabbit control, Stock route/reserve maintenance and ammunition sales! Telephone 03 5886 1203 P O Box 111, Jerilderie 2716.
- Grassland - 1 km south of Jerilderie on the Newell Highway.

And Also.

- Butterflies - Caper White, white with black markings. A migratory species reaching us in October. Noted flying NE to SW 27/9/98.
- Woodswallow - Watched White-browed fly through the You Yangs as we pulled boneseed. See - it's not all work.
- Blue-winged Parrots - When looking for sun orchids in the Anglesea heathlands or Mt. Ingoldby Reserve watch for these small ground-feeding birds.
- Visit a country cemetery - Remnant native vegetation can be found in there and maybe an old species rose e.g. Bannockburn and Inverleigh.
- Count the newly planted trees at Jerringot. Count quietly so that you don't disturb the shy ones - Latham's Snipe, Baillon's Crane, Buff-banded Rail and the ground nesting Black-fronted Plover which could put on a distraction display if you get close to its nest.
- Go backwards - to Geelong Naturalist October 1997 for more things to see and do.

□

LIBRARY NOTES

... *Betty Moore*

EMU - Journal of the RAOU - Sep'98
This issue has a very interesting article by R.A.Wood on the seasonal changes in the diet of Pied Currawongs. It is based on studies carried out at Wollongong. Observations showed that fruit was the major part of their diet in the non-breeding season, switching to mostly insects during the breeding season and nestling and juvenile birds when feeding their own nestlings and immature juveniles. In the study area this period extended from September to March. Birds of unknown breeding status stuck to fruit, insects, nectar and leaves during this period.

The impact of Pied Currawongs on song-bird populations has been much discussed. A recent study in Canberra found that each breeding pair of Pied Currawongs killed about 40 broods of small passerines to raise one brood of their own.

Thanks to Donna Wood, the library has three publications put out by VPNA, an Endangered Ecosystem Series - Native Grasslands & Grassy Woodlands, Marine and Coastal and Box and Ironbark. They give a coverage of these habitats, situations and problems as well as conservation measures which are and should be taken in respect of these areas.

ANGAIR Sept '98 - "Get to know our tracks" this month covers an easy walk of approx. 7 km. It includes Mt Ingoldsby, White's track, Ted's Ridge Track and Distillery Creek Road.

Australian Geographic Jul-Sep '98 "Kings of Kelp" by Chris Viney and Rob Walls is an article on the harvesting, treatment and use of kelp on King Island.
"Live Fast - Die Young" - a story of the giant Australian cuttlefish.
"Lightning Ridge" covers the way of life of people in this outback mining country.
There are other interesting articles such as "Tea and Sugar Train", "Cattle Muster" and more.

Field Nats News No. 69 gives a report by Keith Marshall on a talk by Dr Robyn Adams on "Plant Families & Taxonomy" - an interesting article on a somewhat perplexing subject.

Another report by C.Earp is on "Earthquakes & Tsunamis", a talk given by Dr Gary Gibson. □

BELMONT COMMON OPEN DAY
30th August
... *Valda Dedman*

I would like to thank all those who took part, directing visitors, planting trees, leading bird walks and selling posters.

More than 1000 people turned up to play free golf, have a sausage sizzle, fly kites, look at the displays or walk over the Common and see for themselves what a huge slice of it would disappear under water if the watersports complex goes ahead.

Special thanks to Joe Hubbard who did so much work, picking up rubbish and preparing for the tree planting. He is still planting trees and pulling out weeds. Why not go down some Monday morning and help him?

Joe's sharp eyes have also added a new plant to the Belmont Common plant list. A buttercup (we're not quite sure yet which one) is flowering at the edge of the 'Baillon's Crake' wetland. □

What is that bird?

Barry Lingham says it can be confused with a thornbill and that its beak is more like a finch.

Try to work it out before you turn to page 15 for his interesting notes on the observations.

Craig Morley made the observation of this uncommon bird.

Polly Cutcliffe records a bird which is normally a ground-nester but gave up and tried the roof of a house. □

BIO-DIVERSITY NOTES

... *Ade Foster*

Meeting report, September 23.
"Denizens of the Backyard"

This meeting, a school holiday venture aimed at youngsters, was attended by just two regular members, and a visitor who brought along four very interested children. Despite the poor attendance we had an enchanting evening, introducing the kids to the wonders to be found in the average backyard. I spent an hour in my yard that afternoon and managed to find over twenty five species including spiders, harvestmen, slaters, beetles, bugs, earwigs, caterpillars, moths, centipedes, millipedes, fungus and frogs.

We discovered many interesting things about these common 'uninteresting' creatures. Did you know that slaters are crustaceans? or that earwigs use their 'pincers' to fold their wings after flight? How do caterpillars or slugs breathe? What makes a click beetle click? Why did South Australian Railways have to modify their trains because of millipedes? Where do mantids lay their eggs? These and many other fascinating questions will remain a mystery to those who missed a wonderful evening.

Next Meeting: Ponds and Swamps.
21st October, 8.00 pm.

Next Excursion: Forrest area.
Interested people should meet at the Green Grub carpark, Waurnvale Shopping Village at 9 am. on Sunday 11th October.

November Excursion: Inverleigh / Bannockburn. More details next month. □

Thanks...

To John Bottomley, for preparing the report of the Bird Group meeting in Barry Lingham's absence. □

BIRD GROUP REPORT ... John Bottomley

"Birding in Costa Rica"

A Talk By Euan Moore

The Bird Group was entertained at its meeting of 22 September by a talk and slide show from Euan Moore on Birding in Costa Rica.

Euan introduced his talk with a thumbnail account of Costa Rica: a country relatively unfamiliar to most of those present. Costa Rica lies in Central America to the South of Nicaragua and to the North-West of Panama. Latitudinally it lies between eight and twelve degrees North of the Equator: roughly equivalent in Southern Hemispheric terms to the South-Eastern peninsula of PNG on which Port Moresby is located. Although small, about two-thirds the size of Tasmania, the country is environmentally very diverse. A range of mountains, with peaks over 3000 metres high, runs the length of the country from North to South forming the continental divide. Drainage to the East flows to the Caribbean Sea and to the West to the Pacific Ocean. In the North East and East there are wet tropical lowlands and in the North-West dry savanna woodlands. As was well illustrated in Euan's slides, this diversity makes for a scenically very attractive country.

Better still for birders however is the astonishing variety of birdlife. The Costa Rican list may only have three endemics but is over 850 species long: this in a country two-thirds the size of Tasmania!! The primary reason for the diversity of birdlife is that Costa Rica receives winter migrants from both the neo-arctic and neo-tropical avian realms. As such it is blessed with both North and South American species: each migrating to tropical Costa Rica for their respective winters.

The topographic diversity of the country leads to a significant regional variation in the species likely to be seen. Habitat is as everywhere an important determinant of what can be seen in a particular location but in Costa Rica different species are seen to the East and West of the continental divide and, as in PNG, at different altitudes as one climbs higher into the central mountain range.

Euan noted that Costa Rica is probably the easiest Central American country in which to bird, as it is a stable and peaceful democracy. With no army it spends heavily on education and other social services and thus does not suffer from many of the problems found in many Central and South American Countries. The country is very environmentally conscious with numerous national parks, national refuges and the like. In all close to 30% of the country is protected in one way or another. Logging is highly regulated with coffee, bananas, tourism, sugar and oil palm all being important economic activities. Travel is easy with all parts of the country accessible by public transport within one day from the capital San Jose. There are many lodges that have been established for eco-tourists: judging from Euan's photographs some of these are very attractive indeed and most come fully equipped with guides who can identify birds as 'number five, plate thirty-five' or the like in the standard fieldguide 'A guide to the Birds of Costa Rica' by Stiles and Skutch. Obtaining a copy of this book and working with it for several weeks before a visit is a must according to Euan. With 850 species to master this sounds like good advice!! So what can be seen?

The short answer is a great deal and not very much that can be seen in Australia: a good place to go to bolster a life list.

Woodpeckers, hummingbirds, tanagers, orioles and flycatchers are neo-arctic families with several members that can be seen. Among the woodpeckers present are the Acom and Pale Headed: both seen in fine slides. Several nearly impossible to distinguish flycatchers were seen as was a Great Kiskadee, a member of the flycatchers with a distinctive black and white face pattern and yellow chest. Summer Tanagers, a beautiful crimson red, and Baltimore Orioles, a striking orange and black, were also seen. Many species of hummingbird are present of which the white naped Jacobin was common.

Cane Negre National Park is an important wetland providing northern hemisphere birds with winter habitat. Seen here were Olivaceous Cormorants, Anhingas, Kingfishers, Cattle, Snowy and Great Egrets, Woodstorks, Roseate Spoonbills, Great Blue Herons, American White Ibis and Jabiru: no not the Black Necked Stork of Australia but the closely related *J. mycteria* which can be seen from Southern Mexico to Central Argentina. Also present to discourage those thinking of cooling off in the waters are Caymans: Central America's equivalent of the fresh water crocodile of Northern Australia.

A trip to the Pacific Coast yielded Whimbrel, Willett, Grey Plovers and Lesser Yellow Legs among other waders. A flock of American Brown Pelicans and a 'squadron' of Magnificent Frigate birds added variety.

The 'showiest' birds of the night in my book were the Scarlet Macaws and the most interesting story that of the relationship between Oropendolas, Cowbirds and a species of wood wasp. Cowbirds are parasitic on Oropendolas. However in some situations Oropendolas tip out Cowbird eggs whereas in others they do not. The determinant of whether or not the egg is tipped appears to be the presence or absence in the vicinity of wood wasp nests. If wasp nests are present the Oropendolas raise a Cowbird chick: if wasps are not present they don't. The reason seems to be that Cowbird chicks are bigger and more aggressive than Oropendola chicks and are adept at driving off wasps: wasps which if not driven away threaten the success of all chicks: Oropendolas included. Oropendola parents it seems are prepared to feed an extra mouth if it earns its keep by driving away intruder wasps. If these are not present they opt for an easier life and tip the egg.

Euan answered several questions at the end of his talk and was warmly thanked with a generous round of applause.

Next Month's Speaker

Barry Kentish will be speaking on "The Red-footed Boobies of North Keeling Island". Barry has spoken to our group in the past.

BIRD OF THE MONTH
... Valda Dedman

Grey Butcherbird

Name Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*

Description Grey, white and black bird, with strong bill, ending in a fine hook. Black head, white half-collar. Tail black with white tip. Female browner and juvenile distinctly brown/buff.

Length 24-30 cm.

Voice Strong carolling. Also whisper-song, harsh alarm calls.

Food Insects, small birds.

Habitat Forest margins, open woodland, parkland, gardens.

Range Found over a large part of Australia, including Tasmania, but not Cape York or drier parts of the north, yet extends into central Australia. Several races, palest in the north-west and largest and darkest in Tasmania.

Geelong Woodland and forest margins, Bellarine Peninsula, Eastern Park, Belmont Common, suburban gardens. Uncommon to north of Geelong. Sedentary. Breeds.

Nest Untidy bowl of twigs, lined with grass.

The Grey Butcherbird often reveals its presence by its call, particularly in spring and autumn.

Charles Belcher wrote in his *Birds of Geelong and District* (1914):

No one could possibly describe adequately the Butcher-bird's note: it begins with a loud, confused medley of sound, and ends with single notes. It has been described as discordant, but in my opinion it is one of the most cheerful and joyous bird-voices of the bush.

There are other calls: an aggressive staccato shriek, a harsh "karr-karr" and a soft subsong, when other species may be mimicked. Butcherbirds also call loudly in flight, with wings a-quiver.

Belcher declared that if he were to take a bird-lover out with the intention of showing him a butcherbird, he might go all day without seeing one, although the birds were widespread. To see a Grey Butcherbird today, I would go immediately to Belmont Common, where there is a resident, almost tame, pair. Like Magpies, butcher-birds respond to hand feeding and may boldly fly away with food from picnic tables.

Belcher knew the birds from "the beginning of the bush on Swan Bay Road, a mile or two beyond the Wallington". The bush is now reduced to little more than the roadside strip, classified as significant roadside vegetation and is an important wildlife corridor. On 13th September, with the car window open, I drove slowly along this road, when suddenly, to my surprise and delight, I heard a familiar

Belcher believed that the eggs were laid "almost invariably" in the third week of September,

distinctive rollicking carol. I wondered if I was listening to a descendant of a bird Belcher had seen in the same place ninety years before

In the *Geelong Naturalist* of May 1972 there is an account of a breeding pair, of which the male had to be kept in a cage whilst it recovered from a broken wing. The female managed alone to successfully raise one young. She kept in contact with the male through calls and accepted food from him through the cage wire.

After the young bird had left the nest, the female sought to mate again, but her new suitor first had to subdue the convalescent male, in a fight which also took place through the cage wire. Three months later, though, the first male, now fully recovered, was able to drive off the intruder. A new nest was built, but unfortunately no young were hatched.

Why the name "butcherbird"?

They sometimes keep a 'larder' hung up on 'butcher's hooks', for use later. They eat a wide range of foods, including house mice, small lizards, phasmids, and nestlings. The birds feed mostly off the ground, but carry their food to a tree to eat, impaling it on a twig or wedged in a sharp-angled notch. They do not have the sharp talons of birds of prey, having only their hooked bill to assist in dismembering food. So ingrained is this feeding behaviour, that, even if the food is soft and easily eaten on the spot, they still tend to take it away and eat it bit by bit. Ray Baverstock watched an immature Grey Butcherbird lay a large worm carefully over a thin branch and then break off and swallow a piece at a time. In the past they have had an unfair reputation as killers of small caged birds.

Their flight is direct, a flat glide from tree to tree. They have short legs and on the ground they hop, rather than walk as a magpie does.

Nests are often found in belts of pine trees. In the bush, the average nest height is about 3 metres. Belcher found them near the end of a horizontal branch, or more rarely, near the top of a sapling. Banksias and bullocks were favourite trees in his day.

Do two or more birds often use the same nest? Belcher once found a nest with seven eggs, easily separable into two distinct clutches. The eggs are apple green with brownish blotches at one end. The birds form family groups but not with the complicated social structure of magpie groups. Has anyone seen a large group of butcherbird 'teenagers'?

Belcher believed that the eggs were laid "almost invariably" in the third week of September, so keep your eyes open for young birds from now on. Immatures have been noted in the *Geelong Bird Report* in November, January and as late as April.

□

A Great Skua *Catharacta skua* offshore from Cape Otway

by Marilyn Hewish

97 Grey St., Bacchus Marsh, Vic. 3340

On the morning of 4 August 1998 I was sitting on the clifftop just east of the Cape Otway lighthouse. I was scanning with my telescope for seabirds, with some success as there were many albatrosses soaring close inshore. I then chanced upon a single Great Skua flying in the wake of a large cargo ship. I recognised it instantly, having seen two birds of this species just last year in Norway. I watched it continuously for about 10 minutes and noted the identifying features, and when it was lost to sight through distance I wrote a description and checked my identification in a field guide.

It is difficult to estimate distance offshore because of the lack of landmarks, but the bird was maybe 500-1000 metres away at first sighting. The conditions were ideal, with bright sunshine, a light-moderate north-westerly wind (the telescope was quite steady), a low swell on the sea with no white-caps, and clear air with no spray and no mist. The wing-markings on this bird were clearly visible in the Kowa telescope (77 mm objective) I used throughout the observations. When I observed Black-browed Albatrosses at a similar distance on that day, I could clearly see their black brows and bill colour.

Description

A large and robust seabird, estimated a little larger than a Pacific Gull; body, very bulky barrel-shaped; head large with thick neck; wings very broad almost to the tip and then the edges curving in to form broadly-pointed wingtip; wings swept back only a little from the carpal joint; tail shortish, very broad and pointed at the centre so broadly wedge-shaped.

Colour uniform chocolate-brown above and below with slight tawny tint in the sun; on upperwing, a crescent shaped white wing flash over base of primaries; wing flash broadest at wing tip, covering maybe a quarter of the length of the visible primaries, and narrowing towards body end; trailing edge ragged where white streaks on feather shafts only; wing flash breaking up into short white streaks at body end.

Bill dark.

The tawny tint to the plumage and the narrowness of the wing-flash suggest that the bird may have been an immature (Higgins and Davies, 1996).

Behaviour

The bird was first seen in level flight above the wake of a large cargo ship travelling parallel to shore. At first sighting it was several ship-lengths behind the ship and flying at considerable speed. It soon caught the ship, and as it reached the stern it angled up sharply and towered above the ship, seeming to catch an updraft. The abruptness of the change from level to rising flight and the speed of ascent suggested some agility in the air. It then soared in a tight circle for a few minutes, rising continually until it was very high (maybe 100 metres up). It then angled down, joining the wake again, and flew direct and fast along the wake to catch the ship which by then was several hundred metres further on. Again on catching the ship, the skua towered up above the stern, and soared in rising circles. By this time the bird and the ship were becoming too distant for useful observation.

Flight action

In level flight over the ship's wake the bird travelled fast and direct at a height of about 10 metres. The wingbeats were deep, not particularly rapid but powerful and purposeful, with no gliding. The wings were held out from the body and were swept back only slightly from the carpal joint (wrist). When soaring, the bird held its wings stiff, level and straight out from the body. The tail was occasionally fanned and twisted.

Similar species considered:

Dark petrels and shearwaters

Smaller birds overall, body shape slimmer, tail not so broad, wings long, slender and more pointed; brown birds tend to be darker sooty-brown, not chocolate-brown; no wing-flash on upperwing; flight action not so powerful, direct, or high above surface; shearwaters undulate lower over water with fast shallow wingbeats and frequent glides; petrels' flight action in general more relaxed, closer to surface, with gliding.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Immature Pacific Gull *Larus pacificus*

No wing-flash; wings not so broad at base and pointed at tip; flight action more 'flappy', less powerful.

Arctic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*, Pomarine Jaeger *S. pomarinus* and Long-tailed Jaeger *S. longicaudus*, dark morphs

Finer build; Pomarine Jaeger more robust than Arctic, but body not barrel-shaped, and has great depth in chest but becomes more slender towards rear of body. Tail not so broad; wing-flash less prominent; wing shape different, not so broad, widest to carpal joint then tapering sharply and with straight edges to finely pointed wingtip; wing swept back strongly from carpal joint in flight; flight more tern-like, buoyant (especially Long-tailed).

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*

It is difficult to exclude this species with total confidence. However judging by illustrations in Pizzey and Knight (1997) and Higgins and Davies (1996), South Polar Skuas are smaller and more slender than the bird I saw. Pale and intermediate morphs have a distinctly pale and contrasting head, neck and breast, and the dark morph has a pale nape which should have been visible under the conditions. In the dark morph of the South Polar Skua, the brown colouring is dark and has a greyish tint (not chocolate-brown with a tawny tint).

I recognised the bird at once but confirmed my identification immediately after the observation using *The Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* (1997). On returning home, I consulted the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, Vol. 3 (Higgins and Davies, 1996), and other books.

I have seen Great Skuas before, obtaining close views of two birds perched and in flight on the seabird breeding island of Runde in Norway on April 1997. I have also seen Arctic Jaegers frequently from various points along the coast of western Victoria, including Point Lonsdale, Point Addis and Aireys Inlet lighthouse. I have also observed both Arctic and Pomarine Jaegers at length and at close quarters from the stern of the Tasmanian ferry travelling through the heads into Port Phillip Bay.

Discussion

Great Skuas are uncommon winter visitors to Victorian waters (Emison et al. 1987). In the Geelong region (which extends west to Port Campbell), the species is rare. There are no records in Geelong Bird Reports from 1984 to 1997, and no sightings are listed in Trevor Pescott's book, *Birds of Geelong* (1983). The *Atlas of Victorian Birds* (Emison et al., 1987) shows only a few records in the Geelong region, concentrated around the entrance to Port Phillip Bay and the adjacent coast. No records are listed for Cape Otway, although there is no reason to believe that the birds avoid or favour any particular stretch of coastline in Victoria. Records however are more likely where there is a good view over the sea from a cliff or cape, and particularly where shipping lanes pass close to the shore. In part the scarcity of records arises from the birds' preference for shelf-break and pelagic waters. They are less common close to shore than either Arctic or Pomarine Jaegers (Higgins and Davies, 1996), but clearly can be attracted inshore by vessels.

Skuas and Jaegers follow ships in order to take discarded refuse, and to pirate food from other seabirds, especially terns and gulls, gathered at such food sources. Soaring has not been remarked on in any of the Australian references I consulted, but Cramp (1983) notes that Great Skuas in the northern hemisphere may soar well above the sea surface on migration, and I have seen birds soaring in updraughts off cliff faces in Norway. I have also seen Arctic and Pomarine Jaegers taking advantage of the updraught off the stern of a ship, hanging in the air for long periods. Such high and soaring flight as I observed would conserve energy and give the bird a clear view of the length of the ship's wake as it searched for food.

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A CREEPING WATER-BUG

Naucoris sp. (Naucoridae: Hemiptera)

by Dave King

8 Traum Street, Portarlington, 3223.

Introduction

The ongoing survey of the invertebrate fauna of the wetlands that consist of Jerringot Reserve and contiguous wetlands within the Barwon Valley Golf Club has collected many species of aquatic fauna. Although all these wetlands are in close proximity, several differences are manifest, in particular water depth, water source and vegetation. Up until now most sampling has been of terrestrial fauna by means of pit-fall traps and foliage beating. The added advantage of determining aquatic fauna is that water quality can be effectively gauged. The range and specificity of fauna is a valuable way of determining water quality.

Jerringot Reserve receives the greater part of its water from storm water drains encompassing both urban housing and a wide variety of industrial complexes, plus a number of roads carrying large amounts of traffic. The golf course wetlands by comparison are charged by run-off from the surrounding open grass land, and tend by nature to be shallow and in some cases ephemeral.

The periodic flooding of the whole area will tend to make the population diversity of each wetland comparable - a state that will tend to become less comparable as time passes between flooding and/or relatively wet periods. The abundant bird life using all of the wetlands also plays a part in maintaining comparable invertebrate fauna by transport of eggs and small animals attached to their feathers. Having said this, it was interesting to come upon the subject Creeping Water-bug in only one wetland, situated on the golf course.

Description

The number of species of aquatic bugs is quite extensive, even within individual families of aquatic Hemiptera. The subject species belongs to the Naucoridae, although not rare, it is limited to just two genera in Australia, the *Naucoris* and *Aphelocheirus*, Woodward et al (1970).

Members of the family Naucoridae are bugs completely adapted to aquatic life, from egg through the nymphal stage to adult. The adult relies on atmospheric oxygen, which is obtained by periodically collecting a bubble of air at the water surface. This bubble of air is held on the underside of the abdomen by a series of fine hairs. Adult *Naucoris* are equipped with wings which enables them to disperse to other habitats if conditions in their present one deteriorates.

The Naucoridae are predacious, the adult stage being equipped with raptorial fore legs. Grabbed by the fore legs prey is held to facilitate the insertion of the beak-like proboscis, and the victim's body fluids then extracted.

Discussion

The presence or absence of various invertebrates are a good indication of the state of health of any wetland. Variation, as delineated by Kabisch et al (1982), is from polysaprobic (heavy pollution with decaying organic matter) with low dissolved oxygen, through α - mesosaprobic and β -mesosaprobic, to oligosaprobic (high dissolved oxygen and little organic decomposition) with limited biodiversity.

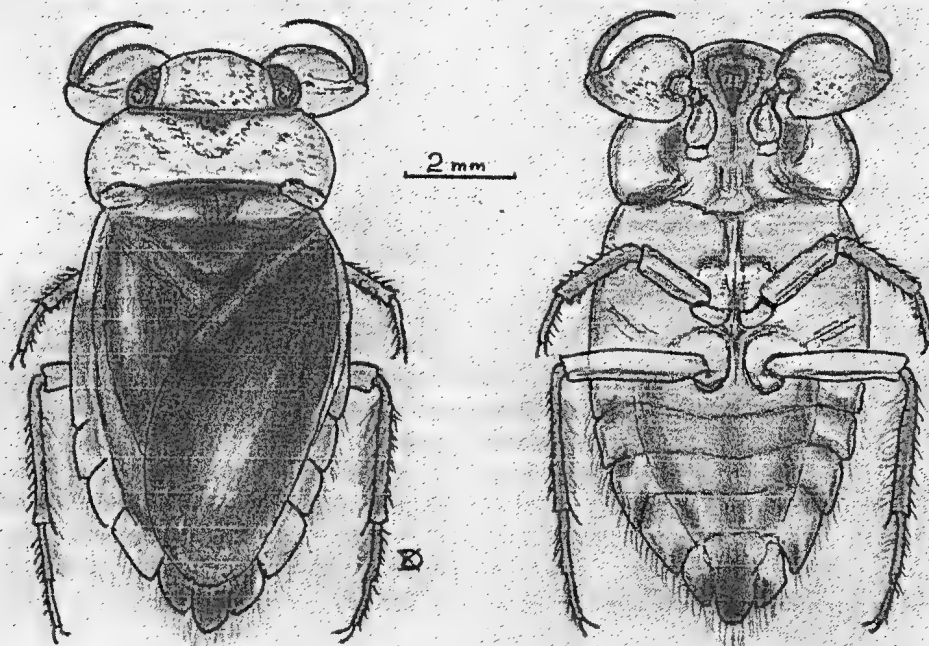
No one faunal organism can be used to identify positively the saprobic level of any body of water, but some indication can be drawn. In this case, the Naucoridae, can only handle prey of size close to its own size, which means there must be a population of lesser animals, and so on down the food chain. To maintain such a food chain the health of the water must be somewhere within the α and β -mesosaprobic class.

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Dorsal view

Ventral view

Creeping Water-bug *Naucoris* sp.



SNIPEFEST 98

... Valda Dedman

The first day of Spring was the day chosen to celebrate the return of Latham's Snipe from Japan.

The weather was kind and 120 children from grades 3 and 4 came to Jerringot and took part in mask-making, face painting, dipping for snipe food and a bird walk. They were wonderful children, responsive and responsible. And the snipe obviously approved, because up to thirty birds were seen.

Sally and Sam Snipe had written letters to the schools taking part, asking if Jerringot was a safe and suitable place for them and the children had responded with enthusiasm. Look in the bird hide for some of their letters.

Many prizes were awarded for the best masks and each child received a participation certificate. The schools were each given a kit of follow-up information and activities.

We received funding from the City of Greater Geelong for the festival, which we hope to repeat in future years as part of our community education activities at Jerringot.

A big thank you to all who helped make the day such a success, especially Lily Sherwood and Sheila Silver, who turned a mountain of mask materials into manageable lots.

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BOOK REVIEWS

by Valda Dedman

69 North Valley Road, Highton, 3216.

Barwon River Environment Trail : a resource for schools

Sue Longmore, David Sutherland, Janice Dart. Barwon Water, c1997.

Wetlands -The Oasis Next Door : a primary school resource book

Sybil Bond, Sue Telfer and the Friends of the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Inc. FESWI, 1998.
(\$25. CD-Rom version \$20.)

Here are two publications designed to assist teachers in interpreting local wetlands for schoolchildren, similar in intent and results but differing in approach. Both tie in with current Curriculum and Standards Frameworks at primary school level and include detailed notes on learning outcomes. *Wetlands - The Oasis Next Door* starts at Level One and continues through to Level Four; the *Barwon River Environment Trail* is designed for upper primary grades and could also be adapted for use by secondary schools.

The *Barwon River Environment Trail* is an activity-based trail following the riverside track between Rocky Point and Yollinko Park as the river flows through Geelong. It was developed by Barwon Water, which manages this section of the river reserve. The trail is about one kilometre long, with ten trail sites, each with an activity, based on the natural or human-made features of the site. Thus, a variety of wetland/riverine ecosystems and the impact of human uses can be studied. Indigenous grasslands, local geology, river red gums, waterbirds, erosion, habitat plants, aquatic life, wetland types, nest hollows and aboriginal use of the area's resources are covered.

The resource material comes in the form of a kit of printed material in a handy zippered strong plastic bag. As well as the 56 page teachers' guide and photocopiable A3 master sheets which become student workbooks, there are two small books on Barwon River Fauna and Flora, brochures about the Trail and the Park Aboriginal Garden, waterwise notes for senior students, the waterbug detective guide and some Barwon Water promotional material

The teachers' guide is attractive, each page bordered at the top and bottom with a coloured aboriginal-style trail motif. The aims of each activity are clearly set out and, with the help of comprehensive background notes, teachers are guided through each activity. The students fill in the workbook as they go along. There are also suggested classroom extension activities, such as investigating water bug adaptations and life cycles or building and monitoring nest boxes in the school garden.

The focus is on the teacher, and, since a prescribed route is to be followed, the style is directive. For example: "Walk quietly as you approach the bird hide and assemble the children inside" and "Ask children to turn around, face the Barwon River".

No teacher should be badly prepared for this school outing. Barwon Water offers every assistance, from extra help with grass identification to loan of macroinvertebrate sampling equipment.

The kit is also a valuable reference tool for anyone visiting the area. Salinity levels in water, Barwon Basin notes, geological and historical notes, background on the Wathaurung (aboriginal) use of the area all add to the interest of the walk, even without structured learning activities.

I would have liked an index, and flora and fauna lists in the three spare notes pages at the back. My copy of the teachers' guide was also bound incorrectly, which had me puzzled for a while. However, since it is a stapled publication, I was able to rectify the matter. The kit is free to schools (contact Janice Dart phone: 0352 262316), and part of the excellent work carried out by Barwon Water, which recreated the Yollinko ephemeral wetlands in the bend of the Barwon river, planted a River Red Gum woodland, constructed boardwalks and created an aboriginal food garden with sculptures.

Wetlands - The Oasis Next Door refers to two wetland areas, totalling more than 100 hectares and six kilometres apart, at Edithvale and Seaford in Melbourne's eastern coastal suburbs. Both sites are managed by Melbourne Water, as wetlands of importance, for water quality treatment and as floodplain storage. They are remnants of the former much larger Carrum Carrum swamp, which has been subject to a series of drainage projects since the 1870s. Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands is provisionally nominated

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

for potential inclusion as a Ramsar site. The Friends Group (FESWI) was formed in the 1980s.

The book has a wider scope than the Barwon River Trail Guide. It was designed not only to provide busy teachers with a series of activities and background information, but to promote awareness of the Edithvale-Seaford wetlands and their significance both locally and globally. The program is in four levels: Special Places - What's Alive, Habitats are Homes, a Sanctuary for Nature and People, Time and Change. It could be used over four years, gradually building up a sense of identity of the children with the wetlands. However, each activity, or even part of an activity can stand alone. *Snipe Express* is a linking strand running through all levels. Eight letters, purporting to come from Latham's Snipe, introduce the children to this migratory wader and its place in the wetlands.

The teacher's guide forms the main text, followed by 80 photocopiable worksheets, 10 bird fact sheets and 20 pages of additional teacher reference material. A practical feature is the cross-referencing. The level and unit, its title and section are at the bottom of each page. As well, there are indexes to the worksheets, teacher notes and snipe letters. The resource list includes videos, posters, Internet sites and useful phone numbers. The book is spiral-bound for ease of photocopying. *Wetlands - The Oasis Next Door* is also available as a CD-Rom, which allows the page and its related thumbnails or bookmarks to be viewed together. You can easily search and also manipulate information prior to printing. There are also some coloured images. It is good value for money, but the book in hand is remarkably user-friendly and should not be ignored.

The units are inquiry and activity based. The focus is on interaction of the child with the environment, although detailed instructions are given to teachers at every stage. Each activity is organised in pre-visit, visit and back at school sections. Pre and post-visit activities are varied and regarded as important to total understanding of the wetlands. Follow-up activities may involve displays for the rest of the school, community involvement in treeplanting, letters to the newspaper, or ongoing monitoring of wetland birds or developmental threats. The program is full of bright ideas and the active involvement of both students and teachers is encouraged at every stage. There are games, stories, a bird kite to make, pictures to draw. Imagination coupled with observation make for success in promoting awareness and therefore saving the wetland.

Many of the activities could, however, be used at any wetland, and this is the real strength of the book. I have already adapted the snipe letters for use at 'Snipefest 98' at the Jerringot Wetland in the Belmont Common.

It is essential that young people recognise the value and fascination of wetlands and their part in the total ecosystem. No longer must they be regarded merely as dismal swamps, fit only for draining. Programs for schools, and resource materials such as these produced by Barwon Water and the Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands are a necessary part of wetland conservation.

Barwon River Environment Trail

Sue Longmore, David Sutherland, Janice Dart. Barwon Water, c1997.
ISBN 0959491929. Available from Barwon Water, PO Box 3220.

Wetlands - The Oasis Next Door

Sybil Bond, Sue Telfer and the Friends of the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Inc. FESWI, 1998
ISBN 0646317393. Available from FESWI. Cost \$22. CD-Rom version \$22.

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Our Guest Speaker

- Dr John Aberton

John Aberton is currently a lecturer at Deakin university where he teaches aspects of ecology to engineering students. He was previously a secondary school teacher.

John has been involved in the trapping and study of small mammals since 1991. His talk tonight on "reintroducing small mammals to burnt areas" is based around his research that took place over several years.

Currently, John is studying the Rufous Bristlebird in the Airey's Inlet with the assistance of Pauline Reilly.

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A NEW, RARE VICTORIAN SUBSPECIES OF
***Eucalyptus leucoxylon* F. Muell.**
 By K. Rule

Dept. Botany, La Trobe University, Bundoora, VIC.

Foreward

Eucalyptus leucoxylon subsp. *bellarinensis* has been recently described in *Muellaria* Vol. 11:133-136 (1998) by Kevin Rule of Latrobe University. This rare subspecies is of such local significance to warrant Kevin Rule's article being reproduced in full and thus enable our readers to identify its distinctive features and also gain an appreciation of the extensive research required.

Dick Southcombe

Abstract

Eucalyptus leucoxylon subsp. *bellarinensis*, a rare, pruinose and relatively large-fruited form of Yellow Gum occurring in coastal Central Victoria, is described and comments regarding its infraspecific affinities, distributions and conservation status are given.

Introduction

The variable nature of *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* F. Muell. is unequalled within the genus. Its complexity is a result of its extensive distribution, which extends from the Flinders Ranges to north-eastern Victoria and the numerous habitats it occupies. Boland (1979) provided formal descriptions of our morphological and geographical forms: subsp. *leucoxylon* Boland, subsp. *megalocarpa* Boland, subsp. *pruinosa* Boland and subsp. *petiolaris* Boland. Two additional taxa were described by Rule (1991): subsp. *stephaniae* Rule and subsp. *connata* Rule. In 1992 subsp. *petiolaris* was elevated in rank to *E. petiolaris* (Boland) Rule.

Further study, however, has demonstrated that an additional morphological and geographical form of *E. leucoxylon* is sufficiently distinctive in its combination of features to warrant subspecific recognition. It occurs on the Bellarine Peninsula near Geelong in coastal Central Victoria and grows as a depauperate, often mallee-like tree with features including waxy, frequently connate juvenile leaves and relatively large fruits borne on markedly long pedicels.

***Eucalyptus leucoxylon* F. Muell subsp. *bellarinensis* K. Rule subsp. nov.**

Eucalyptus leucoxylon F. Muell. subsp. *connatae* K. Rule et subsp. *pruinosa* Boland affinis sed ambabo fructibus majoribus et pedicellis longioribus differt; necnon a subsp. *connata* foliis juvenilibus pruinosis, et a subsp. *pruinosa* foliis juvenilibus connatis constanter differt.

Type; Grounds of Anglican Church, Ocean Grove, *K. Rule* 9688, 4 viii 1996 (holotype MEL 2042455; isotypes AD, NSW, CANB)

Small, umbrageous, multi-trunked trees to 12 m high. Bark on upper trunk and branches smooth, mottled, white with grey; bark on base and lower trunk light brown or grey-brown, fibrous, persistent as slabs and chunks, box-like in appearance. Juvenile leaves opposite and sessile for more than 25 pairs, connate for numerous pairs, cordate or broadly ovate, blue-grey, discolorous, waxy, to 9 cm long and 8 cm wide. Lightly waxy pre-adult leaves occasionally present in the canopy. Adult leaves petiolate, the petiole 1-1.5 cm long, the blade lanceolate or broadly lanceolate, 10-16 cm long, 1.5-3 cm wide, blue-green, sub-lustrous, acuminate. Inflorescences axillary, simple, 3 flowered; peduncles slender, to 2 cm long. Floral buds on pedicels 2-3 cm long, the floral bud proper globular, excluding the beak 5-7 mm long, 5-7 mm wide, unscarred, the sepaline operculum intact, often with a conspicuous beak to 9 mm long, sometimes lightly waxy; outer whorls of stamens as staminodes; filaments white; staminophore often persisting with fruit. Fruits hemispherical, 8-10 mm long, 9-13(-14) mm wide; discs descending; valves enclosed; pedicels 15-27 mm long, occasionally swollen immediately below the hypanthium; locules 5-7. (Fig. 1)

Phenology

Flowers: April and May.

Additional specimens examined:

Victoria: Sunset Strip adjacent to Bell Bvd., Jan Juc, *P. Carolan*, 14 v 1986 (MEL 684518); North-east of Ocean Grove on Wallington Road, 300 m north of Rhinds Road, *K. Rule* 9745 and *M. Trengove*, 14 III 1997 (MEL); Kingston Park, Ocean Grove, *K. Rule* 9746 and *M. Trengove*, 14 III 1997 (MEL); adjacent to the entrance to Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, *K. Rule* 9747 and *M. Trengove*, 14 III 1997 (MEL); Deep Creek reserve, Torquay *K. Rule* 9748 and *M. Trengove*, 14 III 1997 (MEL); Spring Creek Reserve, Torquay, *K. Rule* 9749 and *M. Trengove*, 14 III 1997 (MEL); 300 m north of the Great Ocean Road, Jan Juc, *K. Rule* 9750 and *M. Trengove*, 14 III 1997 (MEL).

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

Distribution and habitat.

Populations of the new subspecies are known only from the Bellarine Peninsula, occurring on coastal sites close to the Southern Ocean in the vicinity of Ocean Grove and Torquay, with a small remnant population at the western end of the nearby Lake Connewarre. All sites are often blasted by cool, salt-laden winds. Its preferred soils are heavy clays which are water-logged in winter. (Fig.1)

Scattered remnants on the western side of Jan Juc, previously included with subsp. *connafa*, which have waxy juvenile leaves and fruit sizes and pedicel lengths within the range of subsp. *bellarinensis*, are now considered a part of the new subspecies.

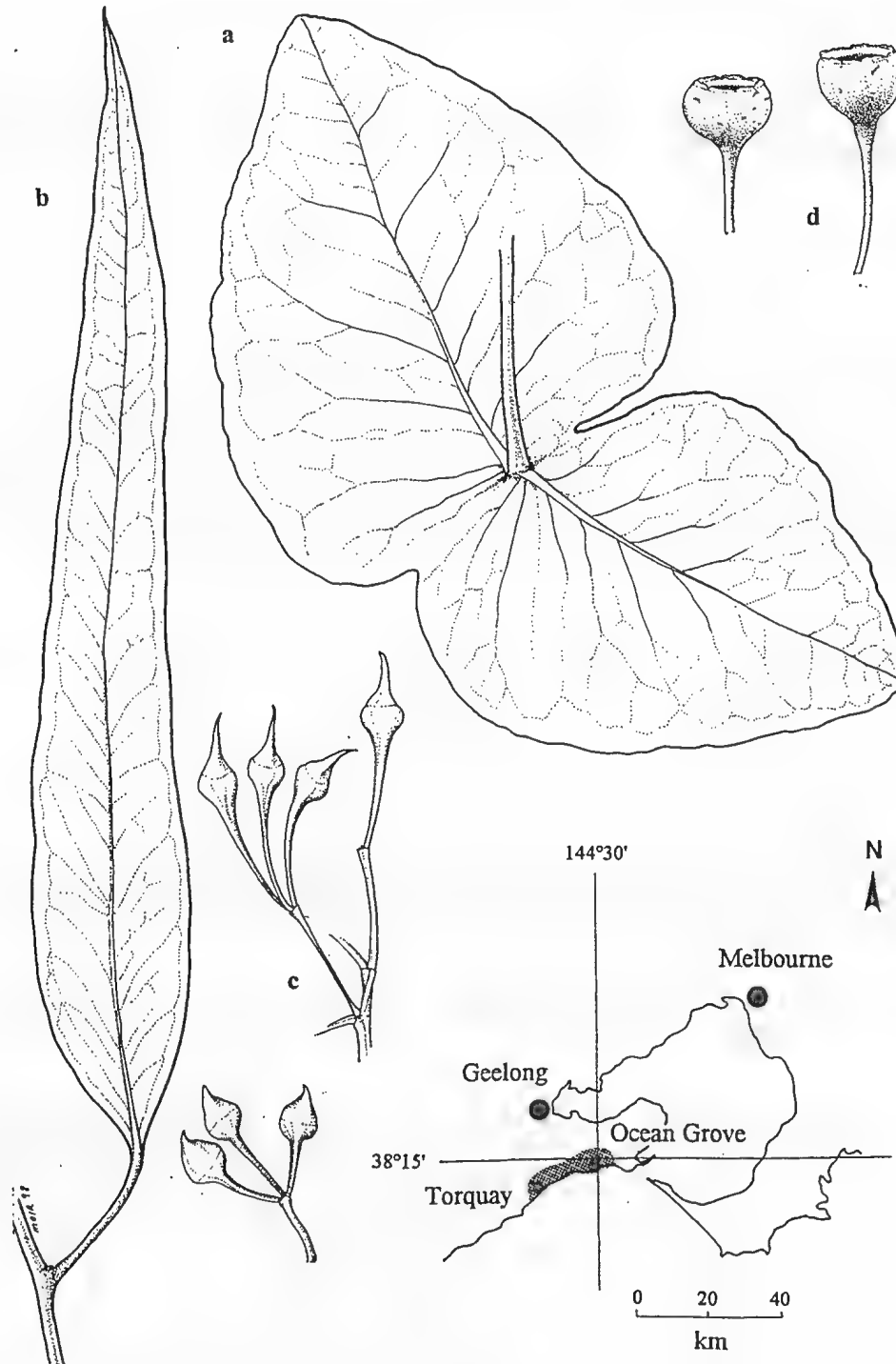


Fig. 1. ad *Eucalyptus leucoxyton* subsp. *bellarinensis* (Rule 9688): a juvenile leaf x1; b adult leaf x1; c buds x1; d fruit x1; distribution of *Eucalyptus leucoxyton* subsp. *bellarinensis*.

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

Etymology

The subspecific name is in reference to the location of the new subspecies on the Bellarine Peninsula near Geelong in coastal Central Victoria.

Conservation status

The new subspecies now exists on outskirts of the developing townships of Ocean Grove and Torquay. Clearing for housing blocks and farms have left only remnants on farms, at roadsides and in a few small nature reserves. There is an urgent need for conservation strategies to preserve the remaining unprotected populations. In accordance with Briggs & Leigh (1989), a status of 2V is recommended.

Associated species

Eucalyptus viminalis Labill. has been observed in association with the new subspecies and *E.ovata* Labill. often occurs in the vicinity. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* Dehnh. occurs adjacent to the Lake Connewarre population.

Discussion

Eucalyptus leucoxylo subsp. *bellarinensis* is distinctive in its combination of features which include a coastal habitat, a stocking of box-like bark, waxy connate juvenile leaves, globular buds with often prominently beaked opercula and relatively large, hemispherical fruits borne on markedly long pedicels. It is similar to subsp. *connata* in having globular buds, hemispherical fruits (distinctly wider than long) and frequently connate juvenile leaves, but differs from that subspecies which has a less exposed subcoastal habitat, is smooth-barked, has a shorter-beaked operculum and generally smaller fruits borne on shorter pedicels (in subsp. *connata* fruits 6-9 mm long, 8-11 mm wide and pedicels 8-12 mm long).

The waxy features of subsp. *bellarinensis* also suggest a close relationship to typical subsp. *pruinosa*, but it differs from that subspecies which is smooth-barked, has generally smaller adult leaves (in subsp. *pruinosa* adult leaves to 15 cm long, 2 cm wide), smaller buds without a prominent beak (the beak, if present, up to 2mm long), smaller fruits borne on shorter pedicels (in subsp. *pruinosa* fruits 5-7 mm long, 6-9 mm wide and pedicels 4-8 mm long). Furthermore, individuals of typical subsp. *pruinosa* exhibit a low frequency of connate pairs of juvenile leaves. In fact, Mr.C.D.Boomsma of Adelaide (pers.comm) has noted that connation is rarely observed in the population from which the type of subsp. *pruinosa* was supposed to have been collected (near Bethany in the Barossa Valley of South Australia). Unlike the typical populations of subsp. *pruinosa*, in Central Victorian populations individuals exhibit a high frequency of connate pairs of juvenile leaves.

The new subspecies may be distinguished from the other subspecies of *Eucalyptus leucoxylo* by the following key:

1. Wax present on juvenile leaves and/or branchlets, buds and fruits.
2. Pedicels 15-27 mm long (1.25-2.3 times longer than fruits).....subsp. *bellarinensis*.
2. Pedicels 3-8 mm long (equal to or shorter than fruit length).....subsp. *pruinosa*
1. Wax absent from all structures
3. Juvenile leaves frequently connate.....subsp. *connata*
3. Juvenile leaves never connate
4. Pedicels 3-7 mm long (shorter than fruits); dried pellicle present over the orifice of the fruit.....subsp. *stephaniae*
4. Pedicels 8-30 mm long (equal to or longer than fruits); pellicle absent
5. Fruits 12-16 mm long, 10-15 mm wide; adult leaves wider than 2.5 cm.....subsp. *megalocarpa*
5. Fruits 9-13 mm long, 7-10 mm wide; adult leaves less than 2.5 cm wide.....subsp. *leucoxylo*

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr. Cliff Boomsma of Adelaide for his advice and numerous personal communications regarding *Eucalyptus leucoxylo*, to Mr Neville Walsh of the National Herbarium, Melbourne, for advice and assistance in the preparation of this paper, to Ms Mali Moir, also of the Melbourne Herbarium, for the excellent line drawings, to Mr Graham Stockton of Geelong who brought the existence of the Bellarine Peninsula subspecies to my attention and, most of all, to Mr Mark Trengove, also of Geelong, for his valuable contributions, particularly regarding the extent of its distribution and habitat.

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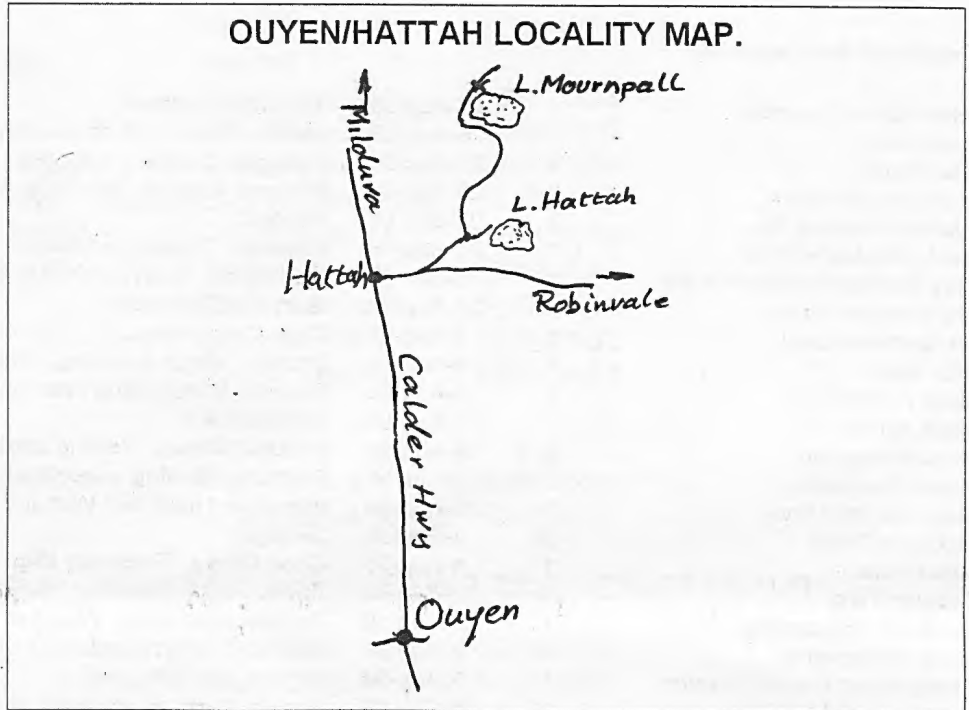
HAZARDS OF A HOUSEWIFE

...Valerie Lloyd-Jones

A lady from Lorne informed me that Currawongs have been stealing her children's socks off the clothesline, apparently for nesting material. She could not understand how these socks kept disappearing until she caught a bird in the act.

To top it all off, a pair of her child's blue silky boxer shorts were stolen by a Satin Bowerbird. She went searching for them and found them at the bower, but the socks are gone for ever.

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OBSERVATION REPORTS

September 1998

-- compiled by Barry Lingham

Marilyn Hewish spent a few productive days near Cape Otway where she recorded many interesting observations. The most exciting was the record of the Great Skua which is usually only seen in areas to the south of the continent. Marilyn's detailed report of this sighting appears on page 6 of this issue..

Craig Morley noted a Weebill in the Eastern Gardens. These tiny birds are easily confused with Thornbills, but they have a beak that is more like a finch. Look for them hovering about foliage near the tops of trees. This is the first Geelong record for some time.

(The recorded GFNC sightings for the period 1990-1998 are:

8/7/92	You Yangs	Barry Lingham
12/11/94	Bannockburn	Grant Baverstock
2/1/98	Steiglitz	Joe Hubbard

-Ed.)

The spring season is now upon us and this has heralded the return of the cuckoos and swallows. Many birds have already begun breeding. It is interesting to note Polly Cutcliffe's report of the Masked Lapwings nesting on the roof of a house. These birds have done this for several years now, but it may not be their preferred site - evidently they earlier had tried nesting on the ground but people destroyed their eggs. The lapwings seem to have adapted well to coping in an urban environment and thrive despite all the difficulties. Maybe the Hooded Plover and other rarer waders that breed locally, need to study the survival techniques of the Masked Lapwing!

Ray Baverstock reported the nesting of the pair of Tawny Frogmouths that have bred in Belmont in the past few years; hopefully they can successfully rear another family. Please keep an eye out for breeding birds as these records help to add to our local knowledge. It would also be useful to have records of the return dates for the migratory waders, so keep a check on our wetlands over the next month.

Observations were submitted by Ray Baverstock (RBa), Rohan Bugg (RBU), Gordon McCarthy (GMc), Ade Foster (AF), Rachel Keary (RK), Valda Dedman (VVD), Valerie Lloyd-Jones (VLJ), Craig Morley (CMo), Marilyn Hewish (MHe), Polly Cutcliffe (PCu), Barry Lingham (BL), Ron Mole (RMO), Liz Kerr (LKe), Rachel Keary (RKe), Vernon & Joan Cohen (V&JCo), Lily Sherwood (LS), Les Barrow (LB), Graham Smith (GS)

Black Swan	170	6/08/98	Barwon Downs. 20 on a dam and 150 feeding in fields.	MHe
Australasian Grebe	5	5-Aug-98	Barwon River; Belmont	VLJ
Australasian Grebe	12	17-Sep-98	Barwon River, McIntyre Bridge. Some immature birds	CMo
Black-browed Albatross	14	4-Aug-98	Cape Otway	MHe
Shy Albatross	10	4-Aug-98	Cape Otway	MHe
Fluttering Shearwater	20	3-Aug-98	Johanna Beach. Otway Ranges.	MHe
Pelican	1	22-Sep-98	Jerringot. Near birdhide.	VVD
Darter	1	28-Aug-98	Melton Reservoir	MHe
Little Black Cormorant	20-30	20-Jul-98	Barwon River near McIntyre Bridge. Feeding in a group.	PCu
White-necked Heron	35	3-Aug-98	Cape Otway area. One group of 13.	MHe

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	27-Aug-98	Heathdale Wetland	RBu
Black Swan	170	6-Aug-98	Barwon Downs. 20 on a dam and 150 feeding in fields.	MHe
Black Swan	3	22-Sep-98	Jerringot. 2 adults + 1 cygnet.	VWD
Australian Shelduck	2+8	20-Sep-98	Brisbane Ranges. Mt Wallace Road, 8 ducklings / 2 adults	MHe
Black-shouldered Kite	1	22-Sep-98	Jerringot	VWD
Black-shouldered Kite	1	30-Aug-98	Werribee. Flying over house.	RBu
Grey Goshawk (white morph)	1	5-Sep-98	Wallington. Seen perched in tree on several occasions	BL
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	27-Aug-98	Gum Flat; Bald Hills	GMc
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	4-Aug-98	Cape Otway Road	MHe
Little Eagle	1	9-Aug-98	Bacchus Marsh township. Chased by magpie and lapwings	MHe
Black Falcon	1	1-Aug-98	Bacchus Marsh flying over fields.	MHe
Black Falcon	1	1-Aug-98	Hospital Lake.	PCu
Masked Lapwing	2+4	19-Aug-98	Bacchus Marsh. Nesting started about 6/8/98	MHe
Masked Lapwing	2+	23-Jul-98	Belmont. Nesting on roof(as in previous years)	PCu
Black-fronted Plover	2	23-Aug-98	Werribee. Heathdale Wetland	RBu
Latham's Snipe	30	1-Sep-98	Jerringot	VWD/RMo
Great Skua	1	4-Aug-98	Cape Otway. Following ship. Rare sighting from shore.	MHe
Caspian Tern	1	17-Sep-98	Barwon River, Geelong. At several places along the river.	CMo
Common Bronzewing	1	28-Aug-98	Anglesea township. Attacked by Red Wattlebird.	RBa
Brush Bronzewing	1	2-Aug-98	Forrest. In town garden.	MHe
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	1	5-Aug-98	Horden Vale (Otways)	MHe
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	35	20-Sep-98	Eastern Park. Flying west at 1025 hrs.	CMo
Gang-gang Cockatoo	5	9-Aug-98	South Geelong. Also 2+ on 6/8/98	LK
Rainbow Lorikeet	30	28-Sep-98	Highton. Nth Valley Road. Daily noisy visitors	VWD
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	12	2-Aug-98	Cressy.	MHe
Crimson Rosella	7 imm	17-Sep-98	Mt Duneed. Up to 12 birds noted over last month.	RKe
Pallid Cuckoo	1	20-Sep-98	Brisbane Ranges. Mt Wallace Road.	MHe
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	9-Aug-98	Long Forest	DHe
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	5	14-Aug-98	Lerderderg Gorge	MHe
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	3-Sep-98	Mt Duneed. Rarely seen here.	RKe
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	17-Sep-98	Barwon River. Princes Bridge	CMo
Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo	1	30-Aug-98	Lerderderg Gorge	MHe
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	30-Sep-98	Lerderderg Gorge	MHe
Tawny Frogmouth	2	23-Aug-98	Highton. Bellvue Ave. Nesting in tree used in previous years	RBa
Welcome Swallow	5	14-Aug-98	Lerderderg Gorge	MHe
Bassian Thrush	1	2-Aug-98	Horden Vale. Seen daily for 5 days.	MHe
Flame Robin	3	2-Aug-98	Horden Vale. 1 male, 2 female	MHe
Flame Robin	1	25-Aug-98	Werribee. Heathdale wetland.	RBu
Scarlett Robin	4	5-Aug-98	Carlisle State Park, Otway Ranges.	MHe
Rose Robin	1	13-Sep-98	Geelong Botanic Gardens. imm male. Some pink on breast	CMo
Crested Shrike-tit	4	9-Aug-98	You Yangs.	V&JCo
Olive Whistler	1	3-Aug-98	Lavers Hill. Feeding on verander	MHe
Olive Whistler	1	2-Aug-98	Aire River Estuary	MHe
Clamorous Reed-warbler	1	27-Aug-98	Barwon River opposite fun park. Bird sing on nest.	LS
Clamorous Reed-warbler	1	1-Sep-98	Werribee River	RBu
Southern Emu-wren	1	5-Aug-98	Carlisle State Park, Otway Ranges.	MHe
Rufous Bristlebird	6	2-Aug-98	Aire River Estuary	MHe
Rufous Bristlebird	15	4-Aug-98	Cape Otway near lighthouse area	MHe
Rufous Bristlebird	1	4-Aug-98	Blanket Bay	MHe
Weebill	1	20-Sep-98	Eastern Park. At least one in Sugar Gums near GCC	CMo
Yellow Thornbill	6+	27-Aug-98	Highton. Helena St. Flock seen at about same time last year	RBa
White-throated Treecreeper	2	30-Aug-98	Lerderderg Gorge. Seen lining cavity in dead Manna Gum.	MHe
White-fronted Chat	20+	2-Sep-98	Connewarre. Feeding in company of goldfinch.	RKe
European Goldfinch	8	5-Aug-98	Highton, Stan Lewis Walk.	VLJ
Red-browed Finch	3	5-Aug-98	Highton. Stan Lewis Walk	VLJ
Olive-backed Oriole	1	16-Sep-98	Mt Duneed. Calling since 24/8/98	RKe
Satin Bowerbird	6	4-Aug-98	Otway Ranges. 1 male & 5 green birds.	MHe
White-winged Chough	10+	5-Sep-98	You Yangs. New nest in tree. Old nest beneath tree,	VCo
OTHER OBSERVATIONS				
Bird Dropping Spider	1	10-Aug-98	Jerringot. Many egg cases of <i>Calaenia kingbergi</i> noted	AF
Water Rat	1	1-Oct-98	Jerringot, near bird hide.	LB
Horse Mushroom	some	1-Oct-98	Jerringot, near bird hide. <i>Agarius arvensis</i>	AF
Sugar Glider	1	16-Aug-98	Bannockburn Bush. Hair found near tree and later identified.	GS

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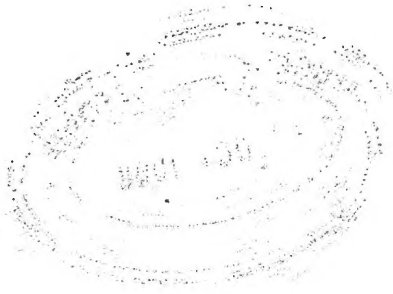
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