

GEELONG NATURALIST

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COMING EVENTS

MARCH

7	General Meeting	Felicity Farris	"Tiger Quolls"
12	Biodiversity Group Excursion		
11-13	VFNCA Campout	Bellarine Peninsula	Several workshops, activities and excursions planned.
14	Plant Group Meeting	* Cancelled	See "Plant Group Meeting" Page 1.
15	Biodiversity Group	Workshop Meeting	
16	Bird Group Excursion	+ Werribee Treatment Farm	Peter Bright
19	Excursion	* No excursion	due to VFNCA activities earlier in the month
21	Bird Group Meeting	Michael Fendley	"The Threatened Bird Network"

APRIL

6	Annual General Meeting	Members Night	
9	Biodiversity Group Excursion		
11	Plant Group Meeting	* Winston Huggins	Flower Dissection for Plant I.D.
12	Biodiversity Group	Workshop Meeting	
16	Excursion	Lal Lal (via Ballarat)	Leader: Gordon McCarthy Barry Lingham
18	Bird Group Meeting	Valda Dedman	"Pigeons"

- * CHANGES TO PROGRAM
- + ADDITIONS TO PROGRAM

PLANT GROUP MEETING

... *Dick Southcombe*

In view of the VFNCA Campout program which immediately precedes our normal Plant Group meeting, it has been decided to cancel our 14th March evening meeting. Members are urged to attend the campout excursions where their skills could be helpful. See VFNCA campout on Page 12 for details.

□

TED ERREY NATURE CIRCUIT

... *Dick Southcombe*

Sherryl Garbut Minister for Environment and Conservation has advised that our application for funds to carry out the Ted Errey Nature Circuit interpretative signage project in the Brisbane Ranges has been successful.

A number of our members have been drafting text, sketches and layout for signs which will be positioned on tracks in the Ballan Road/Stony Creek area. When this stage of the project has been completed, hopefully within the next few weeks, professionals will be engaged to complete the design work and manufacture the signs in time for us to install them before Christmas and submit a final report by Friday 26th January 2001.

Assistance throughout the project will be appreciated.

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VFNCA Campout

Dick Southcombe still needs helpers for this event. His appeal is on page 12 together with the campout program.

□

ON THE TABLE

'On the Table' is 'On the Floor' this month with Ade Foster being in Sydney to help local gymnasts prepare for the Olympics.

□

'POLLY'S' MID-WEEK BIRD OUTING

... *Rhonda Jennings*

Kay, Ron, Jim, Polly, Don, Rhonda and Jan Winstanley met at the Jerringot bird hide at 8.30 am. Jan, a new member, was welcomed to the group and wished 'Happy Birding'.

Kay was our leader for the day, taking us to four locations where we identified or heard 52 species. We started at Jerringot and the Barwon Valley Golf Course where we found 37 species. Among these were Cisticola, Greenfinch, White-fronted Chat, Little Lorikeet and Black-fronted Dotterel.

We then went to Balyang Sanctuary where we walked along the river path adding another three species to our list. Among these were the Little Black and Great Cormorants. Then we were off to Queens Park bridge area where it was pleasant walking in the shade of the trees, as the day had started to become warm. Here we added the Fantail, White-browed Scrub-wren, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Spotted Pardalote, Grey Currawong and Brown Thornbills. Our last walk was at Buckley Falls where we added Dusky Wood Swallows. It was pleasing to see some juvenile birds during our excursion.

Kay was very free with her knowledge of these areas, telling us which birds we may find at other times of the year. She was thanked by us all for a job well done.

Next Outing: Werribee Treatment Farm. Meeting place: Corner of Beach Road (Avalon airport road) and Point Wilson Road. Time: 8.30 am. Leader: Peter Bright.

Rhonda and Don Jennings are also new members, having only joined in November last, and here Rhonda is already one of Polly's helpers by writing up the outing report. Thank you Rhonda. Polly has a late word —Ed.

"This is your opportunity to see waders before they migrate – some will be showing breeding plumage – lots of other birds too, of course."

If you need transport from Geelong, ring Polly on 5244 0182

EXCURSION NOTICE

Due to the VFNCA Campout there is no Club excursion this month.

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AUSTRALIAN NATURALISTS' NETWORK 2000 GET TOGETHER.

... *Dick Southcombe*

A camp is being organised at Alice Springs from 21 to 29 July with pre and post optional safaris. The camp will be based at MacDonnell Range Holiday Park which has a range of accommodation options.

Day excursions suitable for 2WD cars include field trips to a variety of habitats at all points of the compass plus visits to Alice Springs Desert Park, CSIRO Centre for Arid Zone Research, Australian Centre for Remote Sensing (previously LANDSAT), Olive Pink Botanic Gardens and the Alice Springs waterhole.

The optional safaris are 3 days – 18, 19, 20 July – in the Western MacDonnell Ranges and 6 days – 31 July to 5 August – in the Harts and Eastern MacDonnell Ranges.

Everything supplied and 'Tagalongs' catered for.

For further information, booking forms etc, contact me on 5243 3916 asap.

□

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members joined in February

- Mrs Lorraine Phelan
- Ms Amanda Rusiniak
- Mr Anthony Welsh

We wish them a long association with the club.

□

OUT AND ABOUT WITH VALDA
... *Valda Dedman*

What's in a name?, Summer madness, Glassworts, Sea Heath, Rare Geelong Butterflies

What's in a name?

A lot of clues about its owner. The Weebill has a very short bill, fitting for what is considered Australia's smallest bird. Thornbills have small sharp bills, pointed like a thorn. The spinebill's is longer and more curved, the Spoonbill's is a gigantic flat spoon, the Wedgebill's is the right shape for propping open a door. A Boatbill?... well, check the books yourself.

Form follows function and the names give some indication of the bird's methods of obtaining food and its dietary preferences. Remember, too, that a bird's beak serves as hands, lips, teeth and jaws, and is used in nest-building and for preening. It's worth taking a closer look.

Are bird watcher/counters especially mad? There I was, one day in 40 degree heat, the next in soaking rain. BUT there were compensations: two Brolgas, 42 Pelicans and 14 pure white Great Egrets at Reedy Lake, and Royal Spoonbills and Snipe at the salt works.

And also the beauty and variety of the saltmarsh plants, such as the glassworts and suaeda — collectively known as "sapphire", a word derived from "herbe de St. Pierre" or St. Peter's plant.

Halfe way downe

Hangs one that gathers Sampire: dreadfull trade

..... William Shakespeare

The glassworts are so named because their ash is rich in soda and was formerly used in glassmaking.

We have 5 glassworts, from 3 different genera, listed for the Geelong region. All have succulent,

jointed stems and leaves are absent or reduced to a narrow rim on stem segments:

Sarcocornia Gk. sars=flesh, lat. cornus=horn

Has paired fleshy lobes at the apex of each branch segment, or article (get out the magnifying glass to see them)

S. quinqueflora **Beaded**

S. blackiana **Thick-head** (A poor name for this lovely pale green and russet plant, breathtakingly beautiful seen against the light)

Sarcocornia are small, less than half a metre high. Their tiny flowers are embedded in the succulent axis.

Sclerostegia Gk. scleros=hard, stegos=shelter

S. arbuscula **Shrubby**

An erect, branching shrub to 2 metres high. Favourite perching site of Orange-bellied Parrots, which feed on the seeds and also nip off the fleshy, salty tips. Spikes of tiny flowers in three rows all year.

Halosarcia Gk. halos=salt, sarx=flesh

H. halcnemoides **Grey**

H. pergranulata **Blackseed**

Small erect, branching shrubs; the Grey is only 15 cm high, the Blackseeded up to 60 cm. and has more obvious flower spikes.

If all this sounds too hard, why not come along on 11th or 12th March, to one of the flora & fauna sessions at the VFNCA March 2000 Campout?

Did you know that **Sea Heath**, *Frankenia pauciflora*, another interesting saltmarsh plant, was first collected in Australia by William Dampier in 1699? It reminded him of "Heath, much of the kind we have growing on our Commons in England". His specimens, which still exist, were not studied by early botanists. The species was named from a specimen collected at Shark Bay in 1801 by the Baudin expedition. "*Pauciflora*" means "few flowers", and you'll always find a few at any time of the year on this spreading, mat-like shrub. They are small, five-petalled and pale pink.

Have I been particularly unobservant, or have there really been very few butterflies around this summer? Apart from the introduced, destructive and ubiquitous Cabbage White, which I privately call the rapist - its name is *Pieris rapae rapae*.

Butterflies often have beautiful names. I would love to find a **Fiery Jewel** or a **Small Copper** or a **Chequered Swallowtail**. All are listed for our area and classed as "vulnerable".

The **Yellowish Skipper** has become the Altona Skipper in common parlance, a bit unfair, since the butterfly is listed for Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula and Lake Connewarre. Adults may feed on *Frankenia pauciflora* and are active from September to November and again in March, so look out for them this month. The usual larval food plants are large coarse sedges such as the Gahnias. Classified as endangered in Victoria, this species has friends at Altona, and a management plan.

Populations of the **Sword-grass Brown** are being helped by the Sword-grass Brown Butterfly Project (SBBP), which was initiated in 1993 by the Knox Environment Group, which was interested in the conservation of this locally significant species. (It also occurs at Anglesea). Sword-grass Brown larvae feed exclusively on Red-fruited Saw-sedge *Gahnia sieberiana*. The aim of the SBBP is to increase habitat by plantings of the food plant and later to transfer pupae to build up butterfly populations. Schools and the wider community have been heavily involved.

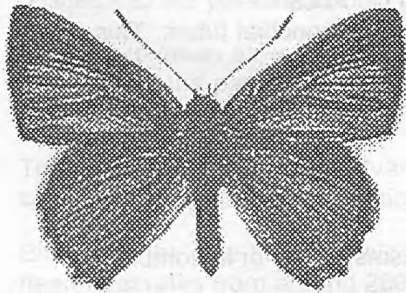
Our own **Small Ant-blue** has friends at Broadford, among them the students of Broadford Secondary College, who have adopted it as the logo for a revegetation project. It occurs at Mt. Piper near Broadford.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

The **Eltham Copper** has a Friends Group but the beautiful Fiery Jewel has no one to care for it specially. So what about it, folks? Together with our own emblem, which has similar needs and ant associations, we could do something to save it.

Of course, we first have to find the beautiful treasure, which used to be at the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve. It is similar to, and perhaps even more striking than, the Small-ant Blue. Both sexes are dark brown with a blue-purple iridescent sheen. Underneath they have patterns like flames, yellow, with scarlet bands outlined with black and white. The scientific name *Hypochrysops ignita* reflects this (Latin ignis=fire).



There is a beautiful photo of the Fiery Jewel in John Landy's book *A coastal diary* (1993, Macmillan, Sydney). He went searching for it at the OGNR, without success. The larvae feed during the day on golden wattles and other plants and return to the coconut ants' nest at night. They are always attended by small black ants. The adults fly from late October until March.

I don't think there are any coconut ant nests left at Ocean Grove. There is however, an opportunity to visit the reserve on Monday 13th March as part of the VFNCA Campout. Keep your eyes open, and think about what we might do. I am willing to co-ordinate a project if I have your support.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT ... Barry Lingham

March 2000

Two major conservation issues have been the subject of submissions from the GFNC this month

(a) The Regional Forest Agreements and the Comprehensive Regional Assessment documents have been analysed and the issues related to forest management for the next 20 years have been commented upon. The GFNC position, especially relating to the Otway area, has been:

- opposing clear-fell logging practices
- opposing logging in water catchments
- opposing logging based on woodchip driven economics
- supporting the extension of National Parks to encompass most forest area south of the Otway divide.
- supporting development of plantation timber to replace logging in native forest
- opposing the 'locking up' of the quotas for forest resources in a 20 year plan, supporting a more flexible 5 year review of the effects of management practices.

(b) The Marine Coastal & Estuarine Investigation draft report recommended the establishment of several local Marine Sanctuaries and a Marine National Park at Point Addis. The GFNC supports the establishment of Marine National Parks and the smaller Marine Conservation Parks. We wish to see additional area around the Barwon Bluff reserved, as well as further sections of the Cape Otway coastline.

It is interesting to compare the general thrust of these two reports; the ECC report on Marine Coastal & Estuarine Investigations is a well planned document, catering for

future pressure on coastal habitat by preserving dwindling habitat and by careful management of the uses of areas of significance.

The RFA document was a thinly veiled plan to allow wood based industries unchanging quotas of resources from crown land forest, with the emphasis on retaining current (taxpayer subsidised) wood extraction industries.

I attended the Appeals hearing regarding the Planning Amendment for residential development of farmland adjacent to the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve on the 14th of February at City Hall. This was my first appearance at one of these panels, and I was impressed by the generally relaxed atmosphere and the supportive directions from the Panel. Many submissions from interested groups were made. Hopefully the final residential development will retain sufficient habitat areas for the Bellarine Yellow Gum and other open woodland. Mark Trengove has developed a comprehensive management plan to improve the Yellow Gum woodland.

We are all looking forward to the March Victorian Field Naturalists Club campout on the Bellarine Peninsular. Over 100 people have booked to attend the various excursions and workshops. As the host club, we will be also supplying supper for the evening activities - please help out by bringing along a plate if you can.

The Annual General Meeting will be held in April. All committee positions will become vacant at this time, and we need members to seriously consider helping out with the committee. For the past few years we have not filled all committee positions and this has added unduly to the work load of the committee. We must have an active committee if the GFNC is to be fully functional.

The nomination forms for committee positions are included in this copy of the Naturalist.

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BIRD GROUP REPORT

... Barry Lingham

Speaker: Craig Morley

Topic: Birds from the Inside Out

Birds, along with all other living organisms, have adapted to meet the challenges of their environment.

Birds make sounds that are an obvious part of an environment.

Vocal sounds (as distinct from mechanical sounds such as bill clattering) can be divided into two categories:

1. Call notes
2. Songs.

The organ of voice or sound production in birds is the **syrinx**

We produce our sounds by driving air through the voice box or larynx.

In Birds the Larynx differs in both situation and structure. The larynx of birds lacks vocal cords and has little or no role in voice production.

The syrinx is situated at or near the bifurcation of the wind-pipe (trachea) and typically comprises:

- a resonating chamber (Typanium)
- vibrating membranes
- control structures such as cartilage and muscle

The syrinx shows a great deal of variation between species; it is so variable that a generalised description is impossible.

On the basis of location, there are different types :

1. TRACHEAL- at the base of the TRACHEA, in New World Passerines such as Ovenbirds and Antbirds.
2. BRONCHIAL- at the base of each BRONCHUS. Only clearly identified in some in Cuckoos.
3. TRACHEO-BRONCHIAL- at the junction of the trachea where it divides into the two bronchial tubes. This is the most widespread.

Basic functioning involves some or all of:

- * membranes bulge with air pressure
- * membranes vibrate by the moving stream of exhaled air

Amplitude (volume) and pitch (frequency) are affected by three interrelated mechanisms, singly or in combination:

- * altering the air pressure in the chamber relative to that in the bronchi
- * by partially or completely blocking the air passages with the external labia
- * and by varying the tension of the muscles acting on the cartilages supporting the membranes.

A number of researchers are now finding 'the two voice' phenomenon, indicating that the right and left halves of the syrinx are acoustically and neurological independent.

HOW ARE BIRDS ABLE TO FLY?

Birds wings are constructed on an entirely different mechanical principle from bats and pterosaurs.

A flying animal has to support its own weight in air and overcome the drag caused by its own forward motion. The weight is supported by constantly pushing air down. In order to fly a bird must solve two basic problems:

1. The reduction of weight by
 - * thin, hollow bones
 - * extremely light feathers,
 - * elimination of teeth and jaws,
 - * a system of branching air-sacs,
 - * oviparous reproduction
 - * the atrophy of gonads between breeding seasons,
2. The increase of power.

In birds the lifting surface is formed by the flight feathers, which are stiff and need to be supported only at the base of the shaft. The wing is a light variable vane for striking the air.

The wing has an asymmetric profile so that air passing over has further to travel than the air passing underneath and so flows faster. Pressure falls as speed rises therefore the wing experiences reduced air pressure above and increased pressure beneath.

This pressure difference leads to a lift force acting at right angles to direction of movement.

The magnitude of the lift force depends on two factors:

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

- 1 the speed of flight
- 2 the degree of asymmetry in the aerofoil profile.

The wings are attached high up on the thorax with the centre of gravity and the heavy internal organs well below the shoulder.

In steady level flight a bird must generate forces which support the weight against gravity and provide propulsive thrust against drag.

To be able to fly birds must have a supply of oxygen. To the bottom of the trachea, the respiratory system of birds is very similar to that of mammals. In mammals the trachea branches into two 20 or more times, yielding a million or more tubes which end in airsacs or alveoli where gas exchange with the blood occurs.

In birds the trachea divides evenly only once, then unevenly twice more. the second of these uneven divisions results in parabronchi in the lungs which form the gas exchange sites.

Birds do not have a diaphragm. A bird's lung is not a hollow dead-end sack; it allows air to pass through it. A bird's air sacs are not extra lungs. The walls of these sacs do not have a rich blood supply and they have smooth walls - their function is to act as bellows and air reservoirs.

The entrance of air is due to an increase in volume of the body cavity, which reduces the pressure. Air moves straight through the lung going directly to the posterior air sacs. During expiration, the body cavity is reduced in volume and air is forced from the posterior sacs into the lung.

During the next inhalation this air continues to move through the lung into the abdominal sacs and some air is pushed into the parabronchi.

During expiration air is forced from the posterior sacs into the lung. During the next inhalation this air continues to move along the parabronchi and into the anterior sacs, making more room for more inspired air. So the anterior air sacs serve as reservoirs to hold air rich in carbon dioxide prior to exhalation.

Thus the bird has a great advantage of continuous ventilation of the gas exchange areas and there is little dead space which could dilute incoming air.

Birds must be able to move this oxygen-rich blood efficiently and quickly in order to fly. To achieve this, they have heart beat rates from around 200 beats per minute in eagles to nearly 500 beats per minute in humming birds.

One conspicuous feature of birds is the egg. To produce a fertilized egg a sperm and an ovum are needed. Sperm are produced in the testis, ova are produced in the ovary. (only the left ovary develops in birds).

To reduce weight, in the non-breeding season the gonads are small, the testes weighing as little as 0.005% of total body weight. In response to increased hormone levels at the start of the breeding season they may increase size by up to 1000 fold.

In each sex the gonads are suspended, in the body cavity, from the dorsal wall. Birds maintain a constant body temperature - a peculiarity of sperm cells is that they do not develop at high temperatures. Birds keep the testes in the body cavity to avoid heat loss in cold weather and maintain a stream-lined profile but solve the problem of maintaining viable sperm in one of two ways:

- producing sperm at night when body temperature drops slightly
- the sperm storage area swells near the vent or cloaca which maybe 4⁰C lower than body temperature.

Fertilisation takes place in the infundibulum. It then moves to the largest part of the oviduct-the magnum, where layers of albumen are secreted around the ovum, where it remains for approximately four hours.

It is then transferred to the isthmus for approximately one hour where it receives the keratin shell membranes. The egg spends most time (18-20 hr in a hen) in the fourth section of oviduct-the large muscular uterus (shell gland). here it gains some watery albumen and its external limy shell.

During the last few hours in the egg gland, pigmentation of the egg occurs; green or blue from the breakdown of bile pigments, or red, brown or black from the breakdown of haemoglobin.

Next Meeting (March 21st)

Michael Fendley will be speaking on the activities of the Threatened Bird Network.

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FALLS CREEK 2000

These are the plant and bird lists compiled during the excursion to Falls Creek in January and reported by Rachel Keary. The excursion report is on page 14 of the February issue.

PLANT LIST

Necklace Fern	<i>Asplenium flabellifolium</i>	Reddish Bog Heath	<i>Epacris glacialis</i>
Alpine Water-fern	<i>Blechnum pennamarina</i>	Coral Heath	<i>Epacris microphylla</i>
Mother Shield-fern	<i>Polystichum proliferum</i>	Snow Heath	<i>Epacris petrophila</i>
Mountain Plum Pine	<i>Padocarpus lawrencei</i>	Candle Heath	<i>Richea continentis</i>
Pale Vanilla-lily	<i>Arthropodium milleflorum</i>	Leafy Bossiaea	<i>Bossiaea foliosa</i>
Sky Lily	<i>Herpolirion novaezelandiae</i>	Gorse Bitter-pea	<i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i>
Tasman Flax-lily	<i>Dianella tasmanica</i>	Rusty-pods	<i>Hovea montana</i>
Alpine Leek-orchid	<i>Prasophyllum alpinum</i>	Alpine Oxylobium	<i>Oxylobium</i>
Snow Aciphyll	<i>Aciphylla glacialis</i>	Cinquefoil	<i>Geranium potentilloides</i>
Australian Caraway	<i>Oreomyrrhis eriopoda</i>	Ivy Goodenia	<i>Goodenia hederacea</i>
Alpine Trachymene	<i>Trachymene humilis</i>	Creeping Fan-flower	<i>Scaevola hookeri</i>
Field Daisy	<i>Brachyscome decipiens</i>	Alpine Mint-bush	<i>Prostanthera cuneata</i>
Leafy Daisy	<i>Brachyscome rigidula</i>	Victorian Christmas-bush	<i>Prostanthera lasianthos</i>
Snow Daisy	<i>Brachyscome nivalis</i>	Alpine Baeckea	<i>Baeckea gunniana</i>
Spoon Daisy	<i>Brachyscome spathulata</i>	Snow Gum	<i>Eucalyptus pauciflora</i> ssp <i>niphophila</i>
Alpine Cotula	<i>Cotula alpina</i>	Yellow Kunzea	<i>Kunzea ericifolia</i>
Silver Daisy	<i>Celmisia asteliifolia</i>	Gunn's Willow-herb	<i>Epilobium gunnianum</i>
Common Billy-buttons	<i>Craspedia glauca</i>	Broad Plantain	<i>Plantago euryphylla</i>
Violet Fleabane	<i>Ergeron pappocromus</i>	White Purslane	<i>Montia australasica</i>
Silver Ewartia	<i>Ewartia nubigena</i>	Alpine Orites	<i>Orites lancifolia</i>
Silver Cudweed	<i>Gnaphalium argentifolium</i>	Alpine Marsh-marigold	<i>Caltha introloba</i>
Branched Everlasting	<i>Helichrysum adenophorum</i>	Dwarf Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus millanii</i>
Orange Everlasting	<i>Helichrysum acuminatum</i>	Victorian Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus victoriensis</i>
Alpine Everlasting	<i>Ozothamnus alpinus</i> (<i>Helichrysum alpinum</i>)	Bidgee-Widgee	<i>Acaena anserinifolia</i>
Scaly Buttons	<i>Leptorhynchus squamatus</i>	Small-leaf Bramble	<i>Rubus parvifolius</i>
Yam Daisy	<i>Microseris lanceolata</i>	Eyebright	<i>Euphrasia eichleri</i>
Bogong Daisy-bush	<i>Olearia frostii</i>	Purple Eyebright	<i>Euphrasia collina</i>
Large-leaf Daisy-bush	<i>Olearia megalophylla</i>	Snow Speedwell	<i>Parahebe sp.</i>
Dusty Daisy-bush	<i>Olearia phlogopappa</i>	Derwent Speedwell	<i>Parahebe derwentiana</i>
Alpine Podolepis	<i>Podolepis robusta</i>	Creamy Stackhousia	<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>
Variable Groundsel	<i>Senecio lautus</i>	Alpine Candles	<i>Stackhousia pulvinaris</i>
Fireseed Groundsel	<i>Senecio linearifolius</i>	Tall Rice-flower	<i>Pimelea ligustrina</i>
Alpine Groundsel	<i>Senecio pectinatus</i>	Showy Violet	<i>Viola betonicifolia</i>
Bitter-cress	<i>Cardamine lilacina</i>	Ivy-leaf Violet	<i>Viola hederacea</i> & <i>V. hederacea</i> small form
Royal Bluebell	<i>Wahlenbergia gloriosa</i>	Grass Trigger-plant	<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>
Mud Pratia	<i>Pratia surrepens</i>	Alpine Pepper	<i>Tasmannia xerophila</i>
Twin-flower Knawel	<i>Scleranthus biflorus</i>	Bog Moss	<i>Schafnum cristatum</i>
Prickly Starwort	<i>Stellaria pungens</i>	Star-fish Fungus	<i>Aseroe rubra</i>
Alpine Sundew	<i>Drosera arcturi</i>		

BIRD LIST

Gang-gang Cockatoo	Black Cormorant
Crimson Rosella	Pacific Black Duck
Kookaburra	Wood Duck
Raven	Magpie – black-backed
Robin – flame	--white-backed
scarlet	Richards Pipit
yellow	Singing Bushlark
Olive Whistler (juvenile)	Eastern Whipbird
Nankeen Kestrel	

The opportunists

Birds may not have the sense to count how many eggs are in their nests but they certainly are quick to seize any opportunity.

There are "thousands" of Banded Stilts, gulls and pelicans nesting on the flooded Lake Eyre.

Pelicans need forty days to rear their young so they will need more floodwater – remember those pictures of dead and dying chicks from previous floods when the lake dried up?

How did they know Lake Eyre was in flood?

Courtesy Radio Melbourne 3LO 5/3/2000.

A KILLER WHALE OFF CAPE OTWAY

by Marilyn Hewish

97 Grey St., Bacchus Marsh, Vic. 3340

The hobby of bird-watching can lead to all sorts of other interesting observations.

At dusk on 20 June 1999, I was sea-watching for albatrosses and other seabirds from the cliff-top at Cape Otway. There was a light northerly wind and the sea was fairly flat except for a low swell. I was scanning with a Kowa telescope on a tripod, and I saw something tall, thin and black projecting above the waves. It seemed to be a fin of some kind. It was to the east of Cape Otway between the cape and Point Franklin - from a map I later estimated about 2 km away from me and maybe 1 km out from shore - and very clear in the telescope. The light was still reasonably bright. I thought this fin looked to be large, but wasn't sure because of the distance and lack of other objects for comparison. I watched the fin for about 15-20 minutes, taking notes and making drawings until the light started to fade.

Shape and colour: In side view, the fin was considerably taller than it was broad, rising almost straight out of the sea at the base, and then slanting gradually so it was bent over slightly at the tip. The trailing edge was concave. The fin was held stiffly upright. From the front, it was held at a slight angle off the vertical, maybe 10 degrees. When a wave trough went past it, I could see a short stretch of back on each side at the base of the fin. The colour appeared to be uniform black.

Size: I was struggling to estimate the size of the fin, until a mollymawk albatross flew past right next to it. The fin height was about half the wingspan of the albatross, which would make it about a metre tall.

Activity: The fin stayed visible for the entire time at the same level above the sea, and did not sink or rise. The angle from the vertical was also consistent. It was moving slowly but consistently towards me, and weaving so that I got both front and almost side-on views. It appeared to be a purposeful and deliberate movement.

After I had spent about 10 minutes staring at the fin, some flurries of activity started in front and to the sides of it. There were many splashes and areas of disturbed water quite distinct against the flat sea, and sometimes flashes of black bodies within them. At first, the albatross had not passed so I had no idea of the size of the fin and I was thinking it might belong to a large dolphin. I thought these splashes might be made by its companions. However, after I got a clearer idea of size, the fin showed itself to be large, and the things making the splashes were small animals, their whole bodies being not too much larger than the fin. A few good but brief views of an animal at the top of a leap showed them to be flexible, blunt-nosed and tapering to the tail, and they jumped out of the water and flopped back in rather than 'porpoising'. They were all jumping away from the fin. I came to the conclusion that the fin-bearing creature had drifted into a group of seals which were rushing away out of its path.

Identification: I had no idea of its identity, except to think it was probably alive (not flotsam) because of the purposeful movement and regular shape, and maybe a whale or large dolphin because of the size. I 'knew' it wasn't a Killer Whale because I had seen them on David Attenborough's TV programmes, with very tall, thin, triangular dorsal fins with straight front and rear edges. The next day I bought a book (*Whales and Dolphins of Australia and New Zealand: an Identification Guide*, Alan Baker, 3rd ed., 1999; Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW) and saw that Killer Whale fins come in two shapes and sizes depending on the sex of the animal. The only picture in the book that fitted my sighting was the dorsal fin of a female Killer Whale *Orcinus orca*.

Recently I sent copies of my sketches and notes to Peter Menkhorst of the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment. He agreed with my identification and has entered the observation into the department's wildlife database. The field guide (Baker 1999) describes the female's dorsal fin as shorter (up to 0.9 metres) than the male's (up to 1.8 metres), and slightly hooked. Killer Whales are cosmopolitan in distribution and common in New Zealand and Australian waters, particularly around Tasmania and along the east coast. Peter Menkhorst told me that there are a few sightings of Killer Whales off the Victorian coast each year.

□

BIRD OF THE MONTH

... Valda Dedman

Southern Emu-wren

Name Southern Emu-wren *Stipiturus malachurus*

Description Tiny rufous-brown and grey wren with long grey filamentous tail. Back heavily streaked with sepia or black. Male has eyebrow, lores, chin and throat bright blue.

Similar Species Mallee Emu-wren (less streaked, different habitat)

Length 170 mm, tail twice as long as body.

Voice Song: Faint high reeling trill. Calls: Five or six rapid thin high piercing notes.

Food Insects and small arthropods.

Habitat Moist low heathland and saltmarsh.

Range Southeast and southwest coastal fringe from sea level to 950 m., Tasmania.

Geelong Bald Hills, Forest Road, Ironbark Basin, Grasstree Park, Lake Connewarre.

Nest Oval with round side entrance . in low tussock or shrub. Usually of grasses, lined with fine grass.

What has Australia's largest bird and one of its tiniest have in common? The tail feathers are the link between the emu and the wren. The emu-wren's extraordinary and elegant tail is composed of just six feathers. Only two other birds in the world have as few tail feathers and they are not filmy like the Emu-wren's. Like the feathers of emus, they lack most of the fine barbs and barbules that normally lock feathers together. The tail plumes are "so fine ... that when the bird is in flight it is hard to see the tail against a dark background, and the tiny creature seems to have none at all" . So wrote Charles Belcher about 1912.

The tail is not designed to assist in flight, and often droops behind. The wings are short and rounded; the bird would rather run about like a mouse than fly. John Gould remarked that, "in fact, when the grasses are wet from dew or rain, its wings are rendered perfectly unavailable. On the ground it is altogether nimble and active, its creeping mouse-like motions and the extreme facility with which it turns and bounds over the surface enabling it easily to elude pursuit, and amply compensating for its powers of flight."

The bird caught the attention of Australia's early white settlers and the earliest European painting is dated December 1791.

The species was common in the marshes around Sydney and Botany Bay and later in the botanic gardens, but by 1860 when G. Bennett wrote *Gatherings of a Naturalist in Australasia*, it had seemingly disappeared. But then, it is always hard to see in the undergrowth. When disturbed, it flushes only as a last resort and then flutters slowly, low over the heath, for 30 metres at most.

Some of the best descriptions of the bird are by Miss J. A Fletcher, in the *Emu* of 1913 and 1915.

"it is more often heard than seen, and is so retiring in its habits, that it is only discovered by careful watching, flitting through the rushes, and seldom emerging from the concealment they afford him but occasionally clinging most gracefully to the flowering heads of these plants, on which probably it obtains its food."

In the 1850s, when H.W. Wheelwright wrote his *Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist*, Emu-wrens were still common on the Mornington Peninsula. He described them as "scarcely larger in body than a great bumblebee". Emu-wrens have often been likened to crickets or grasshoppers because of their contact chirps. Their song is feeble and calls so high that they are outside the range of some people. The rustling noise they make amongst the vegetation often betrays their presence long before they are heard.

Samuel Hannaford, writing in the *Victorian Agricultural & Horticultural Gazette*, published in Geelong in October 1857,

(Continued on page 9)



**Geelong Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Nomination for Committee positions in 2000/01**

Positions to be filled:	President	Vice-President	Hon. Secretary
Hon. Treasurer	Hon. Minutes Secretary		Ordinary Members (7)

NAME OF NOMINATED PERSON

POSITION NOMINATED

SIGNATURE OF NOMINATOR

SIGNATURE OF SECONDER

Declaration of Acceptance of Nomination

I accept the nomination for the position shown above

Signature of Nominated Person

Date: -----

Please forward this form to the Secretary of the GFNC before the A.G.M.

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(Continued from page 8)

described their habitat, on the "banks of some of the lagoons so common in the Colony, densely covered with rushes with an undergrowth of *Rhagodia*, and *Triglochin*, and the small grass peculiar to such situations, the *Sporobolus*". They are always found in dense, damp vegetation, although that ranges from sand dunes to peaty heaths at an elevation of 950 metres.

Belcher noted several areas where you could be sure of finding Emu-wrens. One was the shores of Stingaree Bay, thence right round to Pt Henry to the Outer Harbour". Percy Wood recalled finding them still there in his youth, but they had disappeared by the 1950s, as they had from other parts of Corio Bay and from Bream Creek.

After the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires it was thought that the populations "behind Anglesea" might have disappeared, but there seems now to be a stable population in the Bald Hills and along Forest Road. In Belcher's day they were at Gum Flat, in tussock grass fringing the creek and in heathy country close to the sea at Airey's Inlet.

At the saltworks Mr Purnell found a nest in samphire scrub on October 25, 1913, which contained one emu-wren egg and one of Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo. The nest was made of fine dried seaweed, lined with feathers and soft material.

"They are slow nest builders and the female does all the work. The male follows her as she collects and flies to the nest with material, but does not assist her otherwise than by cheering her with a song. When flying with a piece of grass, she rolls it first into a neat bundle and does not fly with a long piece hanging, after the manner of some birds. On reaching the swamp she drops into the centre of a tussock, drops out the other side, and continues so from clump to clump until the nesting site is reached". (Fletcher)

Such secretive behaviour may have saved these diminutive birds from human intrusion; habitat destruction and threats from foxes and domestic animals still puts the species at risk.

However, the recent sighting, by Rob Mackenzie, in October 1999, of at least two Emu-wrens in lignum/saltbush 50 metres from the Barwon River downstream of Lake Connewarre is wonderfully heartening. Perhaps we just need to be more diligent in our searching.

□

LIBRARY NOTES

... Betty Moore

Trees & Natural Resources

(Nat. Resources Cons. League of Victoria) Vol 14 No 4. An article by David Meagher on Sphagnum Mosses and their role in alpine environments explains what makes Sphagnum Moss a fundamental component of alpine ecosystems.

It has the ability to absorb and hold many times its own weight in water and slowly releases it as the soil dries out in summer. Sphagnum hummocks provide shelter and food for many insects which in turn provide food for frogs and other vertebrates.

There are also articles on noxious weeds in Victoria and contingency plans for dealing with these pests.

Alan Robley writes about the Burrowing Bettong and the role of the rabbit in the decline and extinction of small native mammals.

Living with Wildlife covers the problems posed by birds and animals such as Cockatoos and Flying Foxes in damage to crops and houses and gives possible solutions.

The Web N/letter of the Threatened Species Network (Vic) December 1999. One of 18 Victorian projects concerns the Spiral Sun Orchid. An area on the coast at Anglesea where this plant grows has been protected from human impact by fencing and re-aligning a walking track.

GEO Vol 21 No 4 "Karri Country" an article on West Australia's unique Karri forests.

"The Mystery of the Disappearing Frogs" a research team in Queensland is trying to unravel the mystery.

"Winter Wildlife" is about Japan's surprising range of wildlife able to survive the harsh rigours of winter.

"Life in the High Country" by Dean Beckman reveals in prose and photographs the rugged beauty of the Southern Alps.

□

ERRATA

The following corrections apply to the Plant Group Report by Robert Preston in the February issue Vol 35 No 9 Page 11.

Actinostrobus pyramidalis – Swan River Cypress or Swamp Cypress

Livistona australis – Cabbage Palm

Corymbia maculata – Spotted Gum.

□

WHITE-FRONTED TERNS IN THE GEELONG REGION

by Marilyn Hewish

97 Grey St., Bacchus Marsh, Vic. 3340

White-fronted Terns are elegant seabirds, which are winter migrants to the inshore waters and shores of south-eastern Australia. On 24 June 1999, I was delighted to find two White-fronted Terns at Apollo Bay. I have personally found them to be very uncommon birds, and this is only the second time I have seen them in the Geelong area in 19 years of bird-watching.

The similar White-fronted and Common Terns alternate in our part of the world. White-fronted Terns occur in winter along the southern Victorian coast and breed in New Zealand and some Bass Strait islands during our summer. Common Terns are spring-summer visitors here, breeding during our winter in the northern hemisphere, in North America, Europe and Asia. Because they occur in different seasons, identification of these terns might seem to be straight forward. It is not always simple however as there are periods of overlap in spring and autumn, and birds occasionally remain for the off-season. In fact, in listing my sighting of White-fronted Terns in the *Geelong Naturalist* (vol. 35/4, Aug. 1999), Barry Lingham wrote, "how many of us would be able to identify them".

I decided to revisit my notebook and go through my process of identification, and indulge in a little nostalgia. I also looked for other records of White-fronted Terns in the Geelong area.

Belcher (1914) knew of the White-fronted Tern and described it correctly as a winter visitor to Geelong. He saw a few birds in Corio Bay. However, nowadays the birds occur more often along the open ocean coastline and rarely reach Corio Bay and areas further north. Their season is May-August. They are usually seen in low numbers but there are occasional irruptions, such as that in 1959 (Pescott 1983). In my experience, White-fronted Terns are rare in our region. In addition to my own two records (1 at Point Lonsdale, July 1982; 2 at Apollo Bay, June 1999), I found only one other in all the *Geelong Bird Reports* since 1984: 1 bird at Point Lonsdale, 15 Aug. 1984 (Lawrie Conole).

Point Lonsdale sighting, 25 July 1982

I saw this species for the first time from the Rip View look-out at Point Lonsdale. It was early in my bird-watching career. Margaret Cameron and I had set ourselves up with two telescopes in a sheltered spot to scan the sea. We soon noticed two terns patrolling just beyond the line of breakers over the Rip, and even as a beginner bird-watcher I could see that they were not the familiar Crested Terns. They were paler, smaller, more finely built and more graceful in flight.

Luckily the birds patrolled for 20-30 minutes, because we needed all that time to agree on identification. It takes time to pick out features on distant, fast-moving birds which are twisting and turning and flapping their wings, and I wasn't too good at aiming a telescope at that stage. I was unfamiliar with the species and wanted to be really sure, and Margaret is just naturally very careful. Gradually we built up a picture, feature by feature, engaging meanwhile in what might be called 'lively discussion'. Eventually, after a period of challenging and cross-checking each other's observations, we came to full agreement.

The description in my notebook and notes on my sketch read as follows (excluding notes on behaviour and conditions):

"Very slender and graceful terns. Medium sized, smaller than Crested Terns nearby, but seemed larger than Fairy or Little Terns. First bird: Very pale overall. All-white except for very pale uniform silver-grey upperwings and back. Underparts pure white including underwing. Tail deeply forked with very long outer streamers, pure white. On the head, a broad black crescent-shaped cap, reaching from top of crown to nape and extending forward to eye. Bill black, long and slender. Second bird: As for adult except pale upperwings quite strongly marked with narrow dark-grey shoulder mark and large wedge at end of wing including primaries. Tail white, shallowly forked."

Apollo Bay sighting, 24 June 1999

My family and I had been on holiday in the Otways and on the last night decided to have dinner in Apollo Bay. Just before dusk we parked on the foreshore, a little early for our booking, so we wandered down to the jetty for a walk. I was immediately intrigued by a mob of Crested Terns gathered on a slipway there, the rails and cross-arms covered down to water level with a jostling mass of about 300 birds. I like to look at birds, no matter how common they are. As I scanned the flock I noticed 2 smaller terns among them. The thought of White-fronted Terns leapt into my mind (because of size and season). One bird was turned away from me and the other was partly obscured by a Crested Tern, so I settled down to wait for a better view, hoping the light would last.

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Meanwhile the family had finished their walk and moved on to the restaurant (muttering "Bird-watchers!"). Soon I had a clear view and made a sketch and notes. And yes - I often carry my binoculars and notebook when going out to dinner.

"Two birds similar. Finely built medium-sized terns, about 80% length of Crested Tern (including tail). Tips of wings and tail level in perching position. Very pale. Broad crescent-shaped black cap, reaching from top of crown to nape, and extending forward to eye: broken on edge over crown by black speckling. Wings and back very pale silver-grey, with short smudgy darker-grey shoulder mark and very fine dark-grey line on rear edge of folded wing. Head (except for black cap) and underparts pure white. Bill long, black. Legs thin, black."

Identification

There is a group of terns with similar size and shape and colouring, but White-fronted Terns are the palest of them. The crucial features for identification at Point Lonsdale were: the size and shape, the extreme paleness of the plumage, white underwings, long bill, and for the immature, large dark wedge on wingtips. One was an adult bird, probably in transition from breeding to non-breeding plumage, having lost the full black cap but retained the pale upper wings and long tail streamers; the other was an immature bird, with the dark shoulder bar and wedge on wingtips, partial cap and short tail. We used the Graham Pizzey field guide (1980).

I identified the birds at Apollo Bay as White-fronted Terns using Pizzey and Knight (1997). The crucial features were: size and shape, the paleness of the plumage, especially the wings, fine line along rear of folded wing, and long bill. I thought they were adults in non-breeding plumage because of their partial caps and short tails (distinguishing them from breeding adults) and short shoulder bars and pale wingtips (distinguishing them from immatures).

Similar species

The possibility of Common Terns or Arctic Terns (rare inshore visitors) had to be considered. I have now seen all three species, but not often. So for both sightings, I consulted several field guides and books. The following features seem to be consistently used in distinguishing the three species.

Common Terns: wings and back darker grey; in adults, primaries (wingtip) darker-grey than rest of upperwing (not all pale), visible in both perching and flying birds; underwing with broad dusky grey trailing edge on primaries (not all-white); immature has smaller dark area on wingtip and secondaries dusky grey (not pale).

Arctic Terns: even in non-breeding plumage, tail extends beyond wingtips in perching birds; wings and back darker grey; greyish-white underparts (not pure white); wingtips darker grey on perching birds; on underwings, wingtip bordered by strongly-defined dark edge; bill shorter; in immature, no dark wedge on wingtip.

Conclusions

From my experience and reference to Geelong Bird Reports, I conclude that White-fronted Terns are indeed uncommon in the Geelong region. It is impossible to draw many conclusions from three records. It appears however that the birds are more common on ocean coasts than in Port Phillip Bay, and that, as Emison et al. (1987) suggested, they are attracted to bay entrances and areas where turbulent water is produced by tidal action, such as Point Lonsdale. Movement and mixing of water masses oxygenates the water and brings food to the surface, providing rich feeding habitat for seabirds.

We are fortunate nowadays in the variety and quality of field guides and books of identification available to us. In 1982 when I saw my first White-fronted Tern, I had Pizzey (1980) and Slater (1972). In 1999, I had a choice in my own library of these two books plus Simpson and Day (1986), Pizzey (1997), a seabird guide (Harrison 1983) and, best of all, HANZAB. At times this wealth of information can be confusing. But with several books you can work out the consistent features, and find illustrations showing the plumage for birds of the particular age class or transitional stage you saw.

I have come to some reassuring conclusions about what I have learnt over the years as a bird-watcher and note-taker. In 1982, I needed Margaret to help me with tern identification. I viewed small seabirds as a group so difficult that they were reserved for elite bird-watchers. I was also put off by the difficulties of distance, constant movement and mastering the use of a telescope. Even now, I'm only confident with the common seabirds and many of them become "the ones that got away" as far as identification goes. But with practice and watching people like Margaret I have learnt to have a try, be patient, look carefully, make drawings and write everything down. I have also learned to value friendly 'argument' as part of the learning experience.

And I have certainly improved in my ability to sketch birds. I wouldn't show the tern drawing I made in 1982 to my best friend let alone a rarities committee, but the sketch from 1999 actually resembles a bird even if it is not great art.

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

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VFNCA CAMPOUT

... Dick Southcombe

As our program has attracted about 100 people, we need lots of members to act as hosts and to make our visitors welcome at excursions, meals and meetings during the weekend. Saturday and Sunday dinners and Mondays BBQ are being catered for, but we are relying on members to provide supper on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Please advise Wilma or Shirley how you can help.

Help would also be appreciated from 4 pm Friday to set up the Barwon Water auditorium and at the evening's sessions attending to the projector, PA system, microscope, display stands, chairs etc.

Members are invited to attend as many excursions/evening sessions as possible, especially the BBQ at Ocean Grove Nature Reserve on Monday.

- Dinners/Meeting. Barwon Water auditorium, Carr Street South Geelong, 300 metres east of Yarra Street, Melway 228 C5.
- Excursions depart City Southside Caravan Park, 87 Barrabool Road, Belmont, Melway 227 J7

Please put your name on the helpers, excursion, evening session lists tonight or call me on: 5243 3916.

□

VFNCA CAMPOUT PROGRAM

Friday 10th

- 3.30-6.00 Register at City Southside Caravan Park
- 7.00-10.00 Register at Barwon Water Auditorium
- 7.30-8.00 Welcome
- 8.00-9.00 Temperate Reef Ecology – Patrick O'Callaghan., Marine Discovery-MDC
- 9.00-9.30 Supper

Saturday 11th Please use few cars

- 1. 8.00-3.45 Bird Watch / Count at Western Treatment Plant – Werribee \$10
- 2. 8.30-9.15 To Queenscliff. Park in Weeroona Pde between MDC & toilet block.
- 2b. 9.30-10.30 Laboratory Session at MDC \$7
- 2c. 9.30-12.30 Marine Biology /Oceanography Cruise.
Assemble at Fisherman's Wharf via Bay St to board Kyena BYO lunch on board \$18
- 2d. 9.30-12.30 Swan and Sand Islands Flora and Fauna.
Assemble on lawn opposite toilet block. Lunch on lawn or on Kyena
- 2e. 11.00-1.00 Investigating a Mudflat Ecosystem.
Assemble at MDC. Lunch on lawn or on Kyena \$8
- 2f. 1.00-4.00 Dune and Shore Flora and Fauna. Assemble on lawn near toilet block
- 2h. 1.00-4.00 Marine Biology /Oceanography Cruise.
Assemble at Fisherman's Wharf via Bay St to board Kyena. BYO lunch on board \$18
- 2i. 1.00-4.00 Swan and Sand Islands Flora and Fauna. Assemble on lawn opposite toilet block
- 2j. -4.00 Relax at Point Lonsdale Park at Rip View.

Evening program at Barwon Water Auditorium

- 5.00-6.00 Annual General Meeting (continue Sunday evening if necessary)
- 6.00-8.00 Dinner & Information exchange with Geoff Howard, parliamentary Secretary for the Environment \$13
- 8.00-9.00 Marine Conservation. Tim Allen.
Victorian Co-ordinator Marine & Coastal Community Network
- 9.00-9.30 Supper

Sunday 12th Please use few cars

- 1. 8.00-4.00 Mud Islands Plant & Bird Survey.
Depart Belmont 8.00 am for Fisherman's Wharf, via Bay St, Queenscliff. Park near wharf or in Weeroona Pde between MDC & Toilet Block. Board Kyena 9 am, disembark 4 pm. \$18
- 2. 3.30-4.00 Edward's Point. Plant, Bird & Shell survey of Port Phillip / Swan Bay shore.
- 3. 8.30-4.00 Breamlea, Black Rock, Barwon Heads.
Survey of Ocean, shore and estuary Flora & Fauna.
- 4. 8.30-4.00 Barwon Heads, Black Rock, Breamlea
Survey of Ocean, shore and estuary Flora & Fauna.

Evening program at Barwon Water Auditorium

- 5.30-6.30 AGM reconvenes if necessary.
- 6.30-7.45 Dinner, Observations, Future Campouts \$13
- 8.00-9.00 Evolution & Animals of Pt Lonsdale Rock Platform
Ken Bell – FNCV Marine Research Group
- 9.00-9.30 Supper

Monday 13th Pack up camp.

- 1. 8.45 am Depart Belmont for Point Lonsdale. Assemble at 9.30 for survey of rock platform with members of FNCV Marine Research Group until 12.30.
- 2. 9.00 am Depart Belmont for Ocean Grove Park (formerly Uniting Church Ingamells Camp) followed by a walk through the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve
- 3. 1.00 pm BBQ lunch and farewell at Ocean Grove Nature Reserve Information Centre \$7

Total of above fees: _____
 Campout fee: \$22
 Total Payable: _____

*The Editor steps down**... Alban Lloyd-Jones*

I advised the President last August that I would be standing down when he does, at the AGM in April, so the next issue will be the last with me as editor. That was to allow plenty of time for an orderly change over. By that time, I will have edited 75 issues of the old newsletters and the old, intermediate and current *Geelong Naturalist* over a period of six years, I have also been recording the observations for nine years and have been membership officer for more than eleven years.

The reason is simple, 'it is time'. We have a club rule which prevents presidents from continuing to serve indefinitely but there is no such mechanism for removing editors who have reached their use-by-date. In theory the editor could continue for a very long period but it would be to the detriment of the *Geelong Naturalist*. It is the only contact for many of our supporting members and we must keep it fresh and interesting.

It is impractical to thank everyone involved - in one issue alone we had 25 contributors - but I must mention Valda Dedman, Joe Hubbard, Dave King and Barry Lingham who, by the sheer volume of their material, have been the mainstay of the publication over a long period. Then there were the regulars, or irregulars, who gave me shorter articles which are wonderful for filling blank columns as well as giving the 'balance' to the publication and interesting little items for readers.

Currently, it appears that a group of four members will take over the task of editing while another member will become Membership Officer and I know that you will give them the support which you have given me. I hope that they derive as much satisfaction as I have done.

In the April issue there will be a notice advising contributors how to submit their material and introducing the new Editor and Membership Officer.

Finally, I must thank Valerie who gave many, many hours of proof-reading and typing and who knew when to retire to the garden when an issue was going badly.

□

OBSERVATION REPORTS*-- compiled by Barry Lingham*

Observations were submitted by Peter Bright (PB), Marilyn & Dean & Cathy Hewish (MHe,DHe,CHe), Lynne Barrington (LB), Valerie Lloyd-Jones (VLJ), Margaret Cameron (MAC), Hans Streefkerk (HS), Craig Morley (CMo), Rachel Keary (RK), Ray Baverstock (RBa), Barry Lingham (BL), Robert Preston (RP), Dick Southcombe (DS), Valda Dedman (VWD), John Bottomley (JB)

Several reports of Little Penguins, both alive and dead, show that they are certainly active at present. Lynne Barrington found several beachwashed birds at Torquay as well as an injured Black-browed Albatross.

Brolgas continue to be noted at Reedy Lake, with Margaret Cameron observing five birds - let us hope that they remain regular sights in our district. Another bird associated with wetlands is the White-bellied Sea Eagle. Rachel Keary noted a bird overflying Mt Duneed, with upswept wings and a light colouration underneath, that was most likely a Sea Eagle. There are unconfirmed reports of these birds nesting along the Lower Barwon lakes last season.

The Collared Sparrowhawk is an uncommon observation, perhaps because observers are unfamiliar with the bird. Peter Bright noted a bird at Ocean Grove. Gang-gang Cockatoos are regular visitors to Geelong at this time of year and several members noted them locally.

The Long Forest Reserve near Melton has an isolated area of Mallee habitat. Marilyn Hewish has seen King Parrots here, well away from the wet forests of the Otways where most Geelong observers record them. In the past few months, Marilyn has recorded six species of cuckoo here - Pallid, Fantailed, Black-eared, Brush, Horsfield's and Shining Bronze ! This is a special place for birds.

(Continued from page 13)

Little Penguin	1	31-Jan-00	Port Philip Bay.	PB
	260	10-Dec-99	Twelve Apostles.	MHe
	2	26-Jan-00	Torquay, Fishermans Beach. Beachwash. Single birds beachwashed on 30/1, 9/2,15/2	LB
Black-browed Albatross	1	06-Feb-00	Torquay, Fishermans Beach. Present until 9/2/00. Has injured leg.	LB
Australian Pelican	6	31-Jan-00	Anakie. Flying North parallel with scarp face of Brisbane Ranges.	JB
Hoary-headed Grebe	2	01-Feb-00	Lake Lorne. Sitting on nests.	PB
Great Cormorant	1	04-Feb-00	Torquay. Fishermans Beach. Also on 6/2	LB
Black Swan	1	01-Feb-00	Lake Lorne. On nest.	PB
Grey Teal	6	11-Jan-00	Belmont. Off Barwon Heads Road/Waurn Ponds Creek.	VLJ
Royal Spoonbill	1	25-Jan-00	Leopold, Gateway Sanctuary.	LB
Brolga	5	09-Feb-00	Reedy Lake. Two pairs. One with one young.	MAC
Latham's Snipe	2	09-Feb-00	Alan Noble Sanctuary, Aireys Inlet.	HS
	2	01-Feb-00	Lake Lorne	PB
Hooded Plover	1	12-Feb-00	Sand Island. A juvenile.	CMo, GG
Black-winged Stilt	6	01-Feb-00	Lake Lorne. Rarely recorded here.	PB
Arctic Jaeger	15	18-Dec-99	South of Mud Island	MHe
Black-shouldered Kite	2	14-Feb-00	Waurn Ponds. One juvenile.	VLJ
Black Kite	1	13-Dec-99	Bacchus Marsh	MHe, DHe
White-bellied Sea Eagle	1	13-Feb-00	Mt. Duneed. Minor uncertainty attaches to this record.	RK
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	08-Feb-00	Ocean Grove.	PB
Grey Goshawk	1	22-Jan-00	Moriac, Reservoir Road. Present for three Days.	PW, RBa
Australian Hobby	1	10-Feb-00	Torquay.	LB
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	6	10-Dec-99	Sherbrooke River, Port Campbell. Feeding on berries of Coastal beard-heath	MHe
	6	13-Feb-00	Ocean Grove.	BL
	35+	13-Feb-00	Belmont.	RP
	9	13-Feb-00	Mt. Duneed.	RK
Gang-gang Cockatoo	3	13-Feb-00	Barwon Grange	DS
	12+	28-Jan-00	Highton.	RBa
	3	11-Feb-00	Mt. Duneed. One juvenile being fed.	RK
	6 to 8	Feb-00	Belmont, North Valley Road.	VWD
	6	08-Feb-00	Torquay, Taylors Park. Also on 14/2(6), 15/2(3)	LB
Galah	35	09-Feb-00	Torquay.	LB
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	49	09-Dec-99	Bacchus Marsh. Variable numbers present since 10/12/99	MHe
King Parrot	2	24-Nov-99	Long Forest. One male, one female. In Golden Wattle.	MHe
Crimson Rosella	3	13-Feb-00	Torquay, Taylors Park.	LB
Brush Cuckoo	1	24-Nov-99	Long Forest. An immature.	MHe
White-throated Needletail	20	09-Feb-00	Belmont, North Valley Road	VWD
	2+	01-Feb-00	Geelong-Ballan Road at Butchers Road. Circling above trees within half a kilometer of a bush fire	JB
	2	13-Jan-00	Newtown.	CMo
Laughing Kookaburra	1	08-Feb-00	Ocean Grove.	PB
White-throated Treecreeper	2	24-Nov-99	Long Forest. Adult feeding one begging fledged young.	MHe
Brown Treecreeper	2	24-Nov-99	Long Forest	MHe
	3 or 4	01-Jan-00	Long Forest	MHe
Spotted Pardalote	1+	11-Feb-00	Highton	RBa
	1	14-Feb-00	Belmont, North Valley Road.	VWD
Rufous Bristlebird	1	10-Dec-99	Lavers Hill.	MHe
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	5+	19-Dec-99	Bacchus Marsh. Small group present since October. At least one begging young since 6/12/99	MHe
	3	11-Dec-99	Newtown. One begging young. Still present 9/2/00.	CMo
Crescent Honeyeater	10	10-Dec-99	Maits Rest, Otways.	MHe
Grey Fantail	2	20-Jan-00	Grasstree Park. Displaying.	RBa
Satin Flycatcher	1	29-Jan-00	Demotts Road, Anakie. A female.	MHe
Grey Butcherbird	1	03-Feb-00	Belmont, North Valley Road.	VWD
	2+	14-Feb-00	Highton. Regular since 1/1/00	RBa
	1	13-Feb-00	Newtown.	CMo
Australian Magpie	1	20-Jan-00	Queenscliff. Mimicking Starling, Cockatiel.	CMo
Grey Currawong	1	06-Feb-00	Newtown. Present until 14/2/00	CMo

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