

GEELONG NATURALIST

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE GEELONG FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC



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CLUB NOTICES

Tonight's speakers are... ...*Club members*

This will be a chance to hear about some of the wide range of activities that our Club members take part in. **Neil McInnes** will talk about the Landcare organisation, **Lorraine Phelan** about her work as a volunteer Land for Wildlife assessor, **Rob Ganly** will talk about the bird surveys he is conducting at Alcoa and **Judy Rowe** will show us some photographs of the minerals she has been researching in the Anakies.

At the September meeting ...*the speaker will be Kylie Annett*

Kylie is a PhD student at Deakin University and will talk about her research into the relationships between small mammals and fungi and present some of the results she has obtained so far.

President's Corner

... *Deborah Evans*

Memberships

Despite a good start to our subscriptions for 2005–2006, we have now fallen behind where we were this time last year. Reminder letters have been sent to those who have not yet re-subscribed and I would urge all those who are not yet financial to get your subscriptions in as soon as possible. Although our numbers have remained fairly stable over the last few years and we have been delighted to welcome a number of new members this year, it is important to ensure that our membership base stays healthy.

Time to have your say

The City of Greater Geelong's Environment Strategy for 2005–2010 is available for comment until 5 August. If you wish to make a private submission on this strategy, you can visit the CoGG offices to obtain a copy or access the Comments and Feedback form at <environment@geelongcity.vic.gov.au>.

Volunteers

We are gradually filling the vacant spots we have for volunteers to carry out our 'behind-the-scenes' operations. We have now boosted our mailing roster team for the magazine, but still need some volunteers to assist Claire with the ongoing work of recording of new items for the library. Please contact me or Claire if you spare a little time for this important Club function. Valda is also looking for helpers at the Snipe Fest. See page 12

GFNC Website

Any observations (plant, mammal, bird, reptile, invertebrate etc.) can be emailed to the GFNC email address or phoned to Barry Lingham (5255 4291) so that they can be incorporated onto the site frequently.

Members will then be able to find out about interesting sightings very quickly by checking the webpage.

GFNC Web page:
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~gfnc/>

e-mail address:
gfnc@vicnet.net.au

We welcome

Dr Jenny & Mr Graham Possingham

Mrs Jill Murphy
and her daughter Phillipa Murphy

**to the Club
and wish them a long and
happy association.**

Members are encouraged to arrive early at general meetings.

The room will be open at 7.15 pm to allow members to use the library, buy raffle tickets, pick up their copy of *Geelong Naturalist*, have a cup of tea or coffee and, of course, chat to other members and visitors.

Mailing Roster

August	Claire Greenwell
September	Jan Venters

Ken Best and Joan and Tibor Korn have volunteered to join the mailing roster team.

Thankyou.

Photograph on front cover by

Dean Hewish

... is a Loggerhead Shrike, taken in Florida, USA earlier this year.

See the full article on p. 4

Next Mid-week Bird Group Excursion

Lakes Modewarre and Wurdeboluc

Thursday 18 August 2005

Leader: Kay Campbell

Meet: 8.30 am at Waurm Ponds Shopping Centre carpark—the all-day parking area adjacent to Pioneer Road between the Service Station and the old plant nursery.

Bring: Morning tea, and a telescope if you have one.

Finish: Midday

Enquiries: Kay Campbell 5243 3311

You Yangs Boneseed Pull

**Saturday 27 August
& Sunday 28 August**

Once again we are looking for a few minutes of your time and effort to weed our 'hill'—it desperately needs more weeds pulled out before they flower in the spring.

Location: The Saddle. Enter the park and follow signs on Great Circle Drive in a clockwise direction. Look for the sign to the gate (which will be closed but unlocked) to our work area. Close the gate behind you.

Time: 9.30 am Saturday
10.00 am Sunday

Bring: Eye protection, gloves, lunch, flora/bird books, warm/wet clothing and, as always, a friend.

Contact: Rob Beardsley 5241 1951 or mobile 0418 534075
Claire & Dennis Greenwell 5243 7047 or mobile 0408 108992

Mid-week Bird Group Excursion

Advance Notice

Thursday 15 September 2005

Bryant Attwood will be leading an excursion in the Buckley Falls area.

Details in September *Geelong Naturalist*.

PLEASE NOTE. This will be on 15 September NOT 22 September as listed in the recently distributed program for 2005–2006

Excursion to Angahook–Lorne State Park

**21 August 2005
Leader Margaret MacDonald**

This excursion will give us an opportunity to visit one of the more easily-accessed areas of the Angahook–Lorne State Park at the start of the spring flowering. Depending on weather and numbers we will do some of the easy walks around the Moggs Creek Picnic Area and/or a more energetic walk up the ridge. (See Joe Hubbard's 'This Month' for some 'temptations'!)

Meet: 9.00 a.m. at Adams Court off Holt Road East Geelong (directly opposite the entrance we use for our general meetings) for those who wish to car pool
or
10.00 a.m. at the Moggs Creek Picnic Area

Bring: Lunch, portable snacks and drinks and walking shoes; if necessary, sunscreen, a hat, raingear.

Enquiries: Deborah Evans 5243 8687

Plant Group

Tuesday 9 August 2005

We made some progress on our local eucalypts project in July and members are requested to bring and discuss their prototype chart at our August workshop. Come prepared with reference material and, if possible, leaves, buds, fruit and flowers of our local species.

**ANGAIR Wildflower Show, Anglesea
17–18 September**

The GFNC will set up a display as usual. Helpers are needed for setting-up, dismantling and manning the display. If you can help contact Deborah Evans 5243 8687

Out and About

...*Valda Dedman*

The first Geelong Field Naturalists Club did not survive to celebrate its 125th birthday, as did the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, founded just one month earlier. It began in good faith on 8 June 1880, with eminent Geelong men as office-bearers (there do not appear to have been any women members, ever), and intentions to meet fortnightly, when papers would be read by members, specimens exhibited and discussed, and to go off on excursions as often as possible. The Club adopted the rules of the FNCV. The annual subscription was set at 5/- and it was still this amount in 1904. A library and museum was set up. Collecting specimens was an important function.

It was a different world then, pictured vividly in this account of the first annual meeting—quite an affair!

The first annual meeting of the Geelong Field Naturalists' Club was held on Tuesday, 7th June, in the Free Library, and was well attended by members and a number of ladies and gentlemen. The hall was dotted here and there with tables, on which rested glass cases, containing the various collections made by members, including shells, sea-weed, eggs of all sizes and sorts, geological specimens, stuffed birds, etc., with numerous microscopes and other instruments and appliances to assist those present in minutely inspecting the rare specimens of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms that arrested the attention on every hand. The meeting partook of the character of a conversazione, the reports and addresses being read and delivered at intervals, and the audience in the interim walking and talking, standing around the tables, sitting down, or adjourning to the refreshment chamber adjacent, as their tastes and inclinations led them.
Southern Science Record vol.1 (1881), p.122-126.

A 'conversazione' is 'a social gathering for conversation about literature, the arts etc.' (Webster) and was a very popular pastime in the nineteenth century. The FNCV and the Royal Society held them annually and the president was expected to

give an address on a suitable subject. (now there's a challenge!). In 1891 the subject of the Rev. Royce's presidential address was 'Sea urchins'.

Those early Geelong naturalists were very interested in Corio Bay, which they dredged for specimens. They collected seaweeds and shells and looked for fossils. The first president, J. Bracebridge Wilson, made a significant collection of sponges, which he presented to the Museum of Victoria. Bracebridge Wilson, (Headmaster of Geelong Grammar) later became Patron of the Club; on his death Professor Ralph Tate was elected to the position, followed by Professor Baldwin Spencer.

The Club had a good reputation but went through a series of difficult periods, rising and falling until its final demise in 1932. The Club amalgamated with the Gordon College Science Club in 1891, only to split five years later and re-emerge again in 1899 as the Geelong Field Naturalists' and Science Club. In 1894 there were 80 members, but only 40 in 1900. During the previous year affairs were 'rather dull' and there had been a debit balance, which had 'vanished with careful management'. By 1904 the Club had reverted to its original name, although its objects were 'the study of Nature and every branch of science'.

The following year the GFNC was confident enough to stage its first nature study exhibition, which was so successful that another was held the following year. The exhibition ran for nine days over Easter and was opened by the Premier of Victoria, Sir Thomas Bent. Public lectures were given every evening and 1767 schoolchildren attended during the day. The exhibits consisted mainly of entries in the nature-study competition. Ellis Rowan's set of 24 paintings of American wildflowers was a great attraction and naturally overshadowed the efforts of the local artists. Women were not well represented in the exhibition, except in the painting section where they won all the prizes, and in the 'Best collection of shells', where Miss J. Benjamin carried off the gold medal

and Miss Patricia Jones was placed third.

In 1905 the club decided to adopt a shell, the Southern Wentletrap, as its emblem. The FNCV also had a shell, the Banded Nassa, which was used for the first time on the cover of *The Victorian Naturalist* in March 1905, so the idea may not have been very original. A branch of the Geelong Club was established at Mortlake in 1906. Membership increased to 68 in 1910 (average attendance 14) and 78 in 1911, but funds had to be augmented by public lectures. In November 1910 the Government Botanist, Dr. A. Ewart, spoke on 'A botanist in the tropics', illustrated with numerous lantern slides and in July 1911 Mr J.A. Leach, M Sc. gave a talk on 'Australia's wonderland—the Great Barrier Reef'.

In 1911, at the instance of Mr H.B. Williamson, the Club took action 'to endeavour to get a plot in one of the local public gardens, set apart for specimens of Australian flora', but was not generally active in conservation.

In 1914, on the occasion of his 21st nomination as secretary, Mr. A.B.F. Wilson was given a purse of sovereigns, subscribed by members; the previous year, after being elected for his seventh term as president, Dr McCallum had been presented with a bound and suitably inscribed set of the *Geelong Naturalist*. After a good start, in 1891, the Club journal was published quarterly until June 1898, then Club activities and articles appeared in *The Wombat*, with those of other Gordon College societies. The *Geelong Naturalist* resumed publication in March 1904, but after the then editor, Charles Daley, relinquished the position in May 1914 (he had moved to Sale in 1912), only a few more journals were published, at irregular intervals.

The GFNC languished as active members moved from the district and World War I took its toll. However it continued to hold regular meetings. Wildflower exhibitions took place in 1919, 1922 and 1923. These were competitive affairs, with entries being sent in from around Victoria by

schools and by individuals (mostly women). Flowers were also sold.

In 1931 the club had another revival as the Geelong Field Naturalists Club and Science Club. Papers were read every month but they included such topics as synthetic dyes and domestic sewage installations (i.e. septic tanks). There was only one excursion and this was an inspection of the Geelong Electricity supply. The final issue (no. 51) of the *Geelong Naturalist* was published in December 1931 and the last article was by the Club secretary, Alan Coulson, on 'Some aspects of local geology'. The

Club survived for only one more year and was then taken over by the Kelvin Club of the Gordon Technical College.

Why did it founder? Economic depression, change of direction from 'natural history' to applied science, insufficient group excursions and field work, the want of a regular journal in which to record the natural history of the Geelong region, or the lack of leaders? Maybe the absence of women members had something to do with the Club's demise.



OOPS!

My hasty finger caused an error in July's *Out and About*. 300 metres should have read 2300 metres. Eucalypts can grow where there is snow on the ground for several months of the year, but they cannot stand frozen soil. Overseas they have become acclimatised to very low temperatures. In Ecuador Blue Gums were introduced in 1865 and planted on dry windswept plateaux between 1600 and 3500 metres. I recall seeing them on the middle slopes of Mt Cotapaxi.

Excursion to the Melbourne Museum Research Collections 19 July 2005

...Deborah Evans

This is one excursion for which we won't be producing a species list! With over one million 'lots' in the marine invertebrate collection alone, the collections stored behind the scenes at the Museum are a treasure trove for field naturalists and also testimony to the work of other amateur (and professional) naturalists whose passion for particular areas of natural history has resulted in extensive collections that have been donated or bequeathed to the museum and now form the core of some areas of the collections.

The 16 Club members who assembled at the Museum were treated to tours of the four store areas of the science collections housed in the main building, led by the collection manager for each collection. The earth sciences collections are stored next door in the Exhibition Buildings (perhaps an excursion for the future?).

Marine invertebrates

We started in the 'wet' invertebrate collection with collection managers Chris Rowley and Dave Staples. The specimens are now stored in 70% alcohol rather than formalin which is carcinogenic and creates difficult working conditions. Safety features are important for this collection and include spark proof lights, specially designed air conditioning and bunding as well as the sprinkler system. Only a small percentage of the material in this vast collection has yet been registered on the computer database.

It has been estimated that it will take 99 person years for the staff and volunteers to finish entering all the items!

The collection contains a number of important *type* specimens (the ones used for the original description of the species). For each type specimen they try to maintain the one *holotype*, which is the individual on which the initial description is based, plus a number of *paratypes* which are individuals collected at the same time and used initially to provide a range for the variation of the characteristic features described but also as an important 'back up' should anything happen to the holotype specimen.

If you thought you had trouble finding jars the right size and shape for your jams and pickles, spare a thought for the poor museum collection manager coping with older material stored in Fowlers bottling jars, jars with now irreplaceable older style sealing systems, and the demise of the company that used to manufacture museum-specific jars of varying sizes.

We only had time to take a quick peek at some of the marine invertebrate specimens, including representatives of each major mollusc group and some fascinating deep-sea creatures, a number of which get destroyed when fisherman trawl the bottom for deep-sea fish such as Orange Roughey. The large tank containing the giant squids was fascinating, if a little 'malodorous'.

Entomology/Arachnology

We moved from there to the 'dry' invertebrate collection where the collection managers face a totally different set of problems in trying to 'keep the bugs out of the bugs'. Peter Lillywhite explained the process that is now used to sterilise material by freezing it to -19°C before bringing it into storage. The naphthalene originally used to deter pests is now being progressively vacuumed out of the special rims at the front of the storage boxes. This collection contains over 1.5 million pinned specimens.

As with many areas of the Museum's collections, there is a lot of overseas material bought or traded in the 1860s by the Museum's first director Frederick McCoy. Amongst the private collections are the Howitt collection which contains a number of type specimens of Australian insects and the British Curtis collection, also containing a number of type specimens. Making these type specimens available to researchers is one of the key functions of these research collections.

Mammals

After lunch we started with the mammals and birds with Wayne Longmore. The mammal collection is of a more moderate size (35 000 specimens) and database registration is now virtually complete and available for access online at <www.ozcam.gov.au> (Online

Continued next page...

Zoological Collections of Australian Museums).

The mammal collection includes bones, study skins and some material stored in alcohol. Some additional space will be created when some of the larger bones such as those of the whales and dolphins are moved to the off-site storage location that houses the larger mammals such as giraffes and elephants. We each had our favourite amongst the smaller mammals—mine was the Aardvark which I've so far not managed to see either in a zoo or in the wild.

The collection's most recent addition was their first bit of ambergris which had arrived only the week before, collected by the DSE from a stranded Sperm Whale. Their most unusual item is a guitar, impounded by Customs because it was made of Brazilian Rosewood which it is illegal to export.

Birds

In the same store area as the mammals is the 70 000 item bird collection, consisting of boxes of skeletal material (of which it is the largest collection in Australia), drawers of nests, eggs and skins, and

some wet specimens. The main overseas bird specimens are from the John Gould collections. The most recent egg collection is a donation which arrived only six months ago, having been collected 40–50 years ago and which is very well documented.

Having a number of collections such as these provides the multiple specimens of each species needed to provide the material for display in the public part of the museum, where rotation of specimens is important to preserve them from the effects of exposure, particularly to light. Display specimens are selected from those with poorer documentation, enabling those with better details of date and place of location to be kept for research purposes.

Fish and 'Herps'

Our last visit was to the wet storage area for fish, reptiles and amphibia. Collection manager Dianne Bray gave us an outline of this extensive collection of over 350 000 fish specimens and 80 000 reptiles and amphibians. A recent addition to the amphibia is the donation of Murray Littlejohn's Australian frog collection, built up between the 1950s and 1990s

and including over 300 hours of tapes of calls. The tapes are being digitally archived and will eventually be linked where possible to the specimen record on the registered database and then made available online.

The fish collection is now being added to by specimens from the recent expeditions to deep-sea areas around Australia and we had an opportunity to see some of the extraordinary fish that live at great depth, a number of which had the most amazing jaws and very nasty teeth, as well as complex luminescence systems. Another collection program has been started for new specimens of the more common local fish to provide a tissue collection for DNA analysis that cannot be done on the older specimens originally fixed and kept in formalin.

We reeled out of the museum suffering from information overload, but with some fresh insights into the complexities of storage processes, the range of research uses to which the material is being put and a wish for one day having a few more hours to poke around amongst the jars and drawers.



Owls and other Birds in the USA and Canada Bird Group 21 July 2005

...Dean Hewish

In February–March 2005, we visited the United States, and Marilyn gave a talk about this visit at the July Bird Group meeting. We were there at the invitation of Laura Stenzler and Ton Schat, who visited Geelong and attended Bird Group meetings in early 2003. They live on the outskirts of Ithaca in northern New York state, but we also travelled to Canada, Florida and Portland, Oregon during our trip. The main birding attraction in the northern USA during winter was owls. Laura had e-mailed that the year was a good one for Arctic owls, which sometimes move south in winter if the food supply is poor in their northern habitats.

The first owl of the trip was located on our first full day in Ithaca. A drive along the local roads in the late afternoon produced a view of a very distant spot in a line of trees. Heavy traffic and a ditch and snow-banks along the verge prevented us from getting close to the bird—a Short-eared Owl. The next owl in the vicinity was a Barred Owl on Laura and Ton's property. Unfortunately, although it answered a tape of its remarkable call ("Who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all"), it remained too far from the house to be seen. Great Horned Owls were reported to be nesting in a woodland park near the centre of Ithaca. I found the male roosting in a high hollow and managed to

get a good photograph. We saw five Great Horned Owls during the trip, two on nests.

Birding at Laura and Ton's house mostly involved keeping watch on the many bird-feeders in the garden. Our favourite birds there were woodpeckers; tiny Downy, medium-sized Hairy and Red-bellied, and enormous Pileated, which all came to peck suet from the feeders. Seed-filled feeders attracted many Black-capped Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, Blue Jays and Purple Finches. Bird-feeder owners in North America fight a running battle with Grey Squirrels, which are ingenious at stealing seed. Marilyn showed a picture of a high-tech squirrel-proof feeder. A weight-operated motor on the perch spun off anything heavier than a bird. We spent an afternoon recording Chickadees with leg-bands coming to one of the feeders, as part of a project organised by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, where Laura works.

The northern migration of waterbirds was starting during our visit. Spectacular numbers of ducks and Canada Geese used the open water on Cayuga Lake that runs north from Ithaca. Marilyn was excited to see a single white Snow Goose among a flock of Canada Geese. She had just missed seeing one in Vancouver 18 years ago—



a Great Horned Owl, Ithaca, New York State

severe case of delayed gratification. A flock of 6000 gulls turned up some rarities—three Glaucous Gulls and two Iceland Gulls—helpfully found and identified for us by local bird-watcher, Jay McGowan. Bald Eagles are uncommon around Ithaca in winter but we managed to see two in the area.

The highlight of the trip was a weekend excursion to Amherst Island in Lake Ontario, Canada. Snowy Owls had been reported there earlier in the winter but most had



Great Gray Owl, Canada

apparently moved away. We had a distant view of one Snowy Owl perched on open lake-ice as we crossed Lake Ontario on a ferry. Resident in Owl Woods on Amherst Island were a Boreal Owl and the closely related Northern Saw-Whet Owl. Most of the trees were leafless but these small owls were not too hard to find as they roosted during the day in small groves of evergreen cedars. The most exciting finds were Great Gray Owls, larger than any Australian owls. These had moved south in high numbers and could be found on fence-posts by roadsides north of Lake Ontario. The internet bird network had given Laura precise instructions. Along the road, Laura had just said, "We should start looking about now," when I shouted "There's one." We saw eight birds in about one and a half hours of searching. The owls were very photogenic and not at all bothered by the presence of people inside the car.

Laura's mother and sister live in Palm Beach, Florida, and a family visit provided an excuse for a trip south away from the cold. The coast of Florida is highly developed, but small wildlife refuges concentrate the birds and make birding very easy, particularly as the birds are used to having people around. Wetlands near the canal estate where Laura's mother lives yielded close views of several kinds of herons, egrets, ducks, White Ibis (the spectacular American species), Glossy Ibis (same as ours, but much more common), Gallinules and Anhingas (related to our Darters). Notices warned visitors against feeding the Alligators, and there were plenty to be seen. Even the beaches had tame birds, including Laughing and Ring-billed Gulls, Royal Terns, Sanderlings and Willets.

A day's drive to the west from Palm Beach took us to Fort Myers and Sanibel Island. Along the way, we visited Corkscrew Swamp Wildlife Refuge, which has an excellent network of boardwalks in a cypress swamp. Noteworthy birds seen there were rare Yellow-crowned Night Herons. The J.N. (Ding) Darling Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island showed just how popular bird-watching is in the USA. The road through the reserve's mangrove-lined estuary actually had traffic jams as whole families visited to see the birds. We were amazed by the concentration of expensive photographic hardware among the watchers. The fashion seemed to be metre-long telephoto lenses on enormous digital cameras. Of course, there were magnificent birds, many of them close to the road: herons, egrets, ibis, Wood Storks and incredible Roseate Spoonbills with fluorescent pink plumage. Marilyn and Laura had a discussion about the dowitchers—Long-billed or Short-billed—one of the most difficult ID tests in the US. They finally decided on Short-billed, and then overheard a local bird-tour operator coming to the same conclusion.

Florida yielded another owl, the delightful Burrowing Owl. These tiny owls live in burrows in the ground and like to stand at the entrances during the day, keeping watch. They used to be common in Florida, but are being displaced by housing development. Local bird-watchers have marked the burrows with white sticks and, after driving past many of these, we saw a tiny bump nearby. While we watched the owl, a second one emerged from the burrow and flew a short distance to land in the grass.

Continued next page...

This species was another long-term goal for us, as we had searched for them unsuccessfully on the outskirts of Los Angeles 18 years ago.

Time to leave the eastern US, and luckily Laura drove us to Syracuse airport early in the morning. We just managed to catch the last flight out before a blizzard shut down all airports on the east coast.

Portland has milder winters than Ithaca, but the mountain peaks nearby were covered by snow. Close to the city were Mount St Helens and Mount Hood, both of volcanic origin. Mount St Helens blew wisps of steam while we were there, but we were disappointed to hear that only three days after we left it erupted spectacularly with a column of ash and smoke. The most noteworthy birding sights in the Portland area were enormous flocks of migrating Canada Geese. Marilyn estimated 23 000 in one flock. Another personal birding goal for Marilyn was an American Dipper. These little dark-coloured birds hunt by walking underwater in fast-flowing mountain streams. They are much more difficult to see against the dark rocks than the European species, which has a brilliant white front. Naturally, after working so hard to locate a Burrowing Owl in Florida, we obtained another excellent view of one near Portland. The Portland area and nearby coastline has some spectacular mountain and seascape scenery and is well worth a visit.

Marilyn recommended the single volume *The Sibley Guide to Birds* produced by the National Audubon Society

as an indispensable field guide to North American birds. Unfortunately, it is definitely not pocket-sized and is a heavy load even in a backpack, but it proved to be the best for the really difficult warbler, sparrow and wader identifications.

Seven owl species seen and another heard was a good tally for just over four weeks birding.

All photographs were taken by Dean Hewish.



Burrowing Owl, Portland, Oregon

This Month

...Joe Hubbard

I know that it's difficult to escape from the troubles of the world—events that disturb and confront all decent people—and leaving most of us feeling pretty helpless.

You might have to carry some of this baggage with you but I want to take you to some of my favourite spots (and no doubt yours)!

There, for just a while, you can lose yourself in the world of nature where your only problem is identifying that bird song, being intoxicated by the heavy scent of wattles, or keeping the telescope on that master of the elements, the wonderful albatross.

Sweet, Sallow and Golden Ironbark Basin 5-8-04

We decided to escape from the strong winds to the shelter of the Basin and how fortuitous it was! The short descent on the nature walk took us into a forest of yellow—or so it seemed with the brightness of the wattles standing out in the grey of the winter's day.

By itself, the shrubby Varnish Wattle doesn't look much, but discover it en masse—what an impact on the senses. There were other wattles too. Probably a stray and a beauty with its long gum-like leaves and spikes of yellow was a Sallow Wattle. Golden Wattles too were about to take their place in the pageant, while the Sweet was reluctantly giving way to them.

Then Val found the first Tall Greenhood, then more, hidden away underneath the shrubbery. Now looking down we soon found Nodding Greenhoods and kept finding them.

You couldn't ignore the honeyeaters, especially the White-naped which presented themselves at all levels of the Ironbark forest—feeding at our feet then high in the canopy among the creamy blossoms. Others noted were Yellow-faced, Crescent, and White-eared.

Eventually we got to the cliffs, the heathlands with a scattering of Pink Heath, and the beach curving around to Point Addis.

A Peregrine Falcon sat on a thin slab of rock peeling away from the headland, and when we turned to look back of the Basin, two Wedge-tailed Eagles glided over.

Don't look behind 9-8-04 Buckley Falls—Barwon River

Above the falls at the lookout, Rice-flowers were flowering. These are probably recent plantings but they looked wonderfully wild in a great setting on the cliff top and sides.

If you forget what's behind you this is a wonderful view of river, rapids, and birdlife.

We took the narrow path from the river up to the lookout, passing through Clematis festooned shrubbery and flowering Golden, Black and Sallow Wattles.

(Don't expect too much but Pink and Rose Robins have been reported in this area.)

Moon Dance

Rippleside 11-8-04

From the jetty we watched the small fry swim towards us and as the school twisted and turned their silver sides flashes as the sunlight caught them.

As we turned to go we saw it—a large, translucent, grey jellyfish—close to the surface of the turbulent sea. Its main body was a squashed bell shape, grey yet blushed with a faint pink. Trailing below were several thickish, tentacle-like organs.

It was fascinating to watch this unusual creature as it pulsed through the water. It was battling against a strong current and a choppy wind-swept sea and seemed to be in danger of being stranded on the beach. I think this creature is called a Moonjelly.

No birds so...

Lake Victoria 12-8-04

If you can't find birds you can always look to the plants which eke out an existence in this demanding environment.

Over and among the dense tussocks of Coast Speargrass sprawled the yellow flowered Coast Twinleaf. Another of its ilk was a Clematis. Also flowering were two small shrubs, the Coast Beard-heath (tiny white flowers) and a Thyme Rice-flower (tiny yellow flowers).

Many of the Wirilda Wattles were dead or dying—age and heavy infestations of the Wire-leaf Mistletoe—probably the main reasons. The bright side—many seedlings, up to 1 metre, were assuring its survival

and that of its lodger, the pretty Mistletoe. Nature looking after its own!

Going around in circles

Moggs Creek-Aireys Inlet 16-8-04

From the carpark we followed the circular nature trail along the creek and through the flowering Ironbarks and Blue Gums. This bounty attracted many Honeyeaters, a large flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and a pair of King Parrots.

At the lower levels of the forest, and especially in the understorey were Crescent Honeyeaters and Eastern Spinebills. Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters were more often heard than seen.

Back at Aireys Inlet we found some welcome sun—the first for the afternoon. This enforced the cuppa stop which came with the view over the inlet and the calls of two Eastern Bristlebirds. We felt that there had to be at least three or four in this general area.

Blue wings over the sea

Queenscliff 20-8-04

It is not until you experience, close up, a flock of Blue-winged Parrots in flight, banking and landing, that you can really appreciate their wing colour, top and bottom it is all blue, and a rich royal blue at that. We were on Swan Island and its golf course to see the Orange-bellied Parrots, and we didn't of course! But that aside the Blue-winged Parrots, distant views of feeding waterbirds on the exposed low-tide mudflats and the overall setting of seascape and village, made for a blissful morning of birdwatching.

Eastern Curlews on seemingly endless flats and shallows, with a supporting cast of Royal Spoonbills in their spanking white costumes and black bills, at that moment for me, epitomised what birdwatching was all about.

From the Estuary to beach

Breamlea 23-8-04

Whatever the season, it's always a pleasure to walk in along the estuary of the Thompson Creek and its saltmarsh and other zones of coastal vegetation.

Today the Clematis and Coast Wattle put on a good show. You can usually hear the calls of the Singing Honeyeater and today was no exception. And from across the estuary we heard the mournful trill of a Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

On the beach we walked through a small gathering of Red-capped Plover and Red-necked Stint and followed a couple of Hooded Plover until another walker put them to flight.

Flutter by

Newtown 25-8-04

Painted Lady butterflies have arrived in the garden. A week's sunshine, after weeks of bleak weather, may have brought them out.

This month there is no 'get you going' segment—it would have been redundant—as the diary notes are pretty much self-explanatory.

*At any rate—go wild and get 'lost'!
Cheers!*



Open Day

The CSIRO will open the doors of its two Geelong facilities to the public as part of National Science Week in August. The open day gives residents a rare look behind the scenes at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) and Textile and Fibre Technology Centre on 18 August.

Secure areas for the biocontainment of exotic diseases at AAHL will not be open, but visitors will get an overview of the laboratory and its operation. The 80-minute tour will include the vaccine laboratory and machine halls. AAHL will be open on the afternoon of 18 August, with tours of the Textile and Fibre Centre in Belmont in the morning. Interested people must register by Friday, 12 August on 5246 4000.

Observations

Barwon River, Queens Park area

...Bryant Attwood

Platypus		Water Rat	
17/6/05	1	28/6/05	1
24/6	1	6/7	1
30/6	2	21/7	1
4/7	3		
5/7	1		
6/7	2		
7/7	1		
11/7	1		
14/7	1		

White-tailed Spider, *Lampona cylinderata*, Lamponidae, Araneida

...Dave King

216/86 Church St., Grovedale, 3216.

kingdf@optusnet.com.au

Introduction

The White-tailed Spider *Lampona cylinderata* is relatively common, and as it finds human habitation to its liking has gained a high degree of notoriety. This is due to it being linked with biting humans who on occasions develop severe necrotic ulcers. These lesions are found to be the result of infection by *Mycobacterium ulcerans* or Buruli Disease—Buruli after a county in Uganda where numerous cases were reported in 1960–70. *M. ulcerans* is closely associated with tropical wetlands, but appears to adapt to temperate wetlands in some cases.

In the writer's opinion, *M. ulcerans* infection cannot be attributed alone to the bite of a *L. cylinderata*. A person bitten or suffering a skin puncture does not always accurately identify the cause. It may have been any spider, insect, thorn, sliver of wood etcetera.

L. cylinderata is easy to identify due to its distinctive white tail. If seen soon after sustaining an unobserved bite or skin puncture, it is immediately labelled the perpetrator. Should ulceration ensue it tends to get sensational media coverage.

L. cylinderata preys upon other spiders and arthropods that may well be infected with *M. ulcerans*. In Australia, natural infections have been observed in Koalas, Ringtailed Possums and captive Alpaca (Portaels 2001), and recent studies have revealed *M. ulcerans* in water, mud, fish and insects.

Description

A medium sized spider, *L. cylinderata* does not build a web to snare prey, but actively hunts nocturnally. Of generally dull appearance, the cephalothorax is a bluish

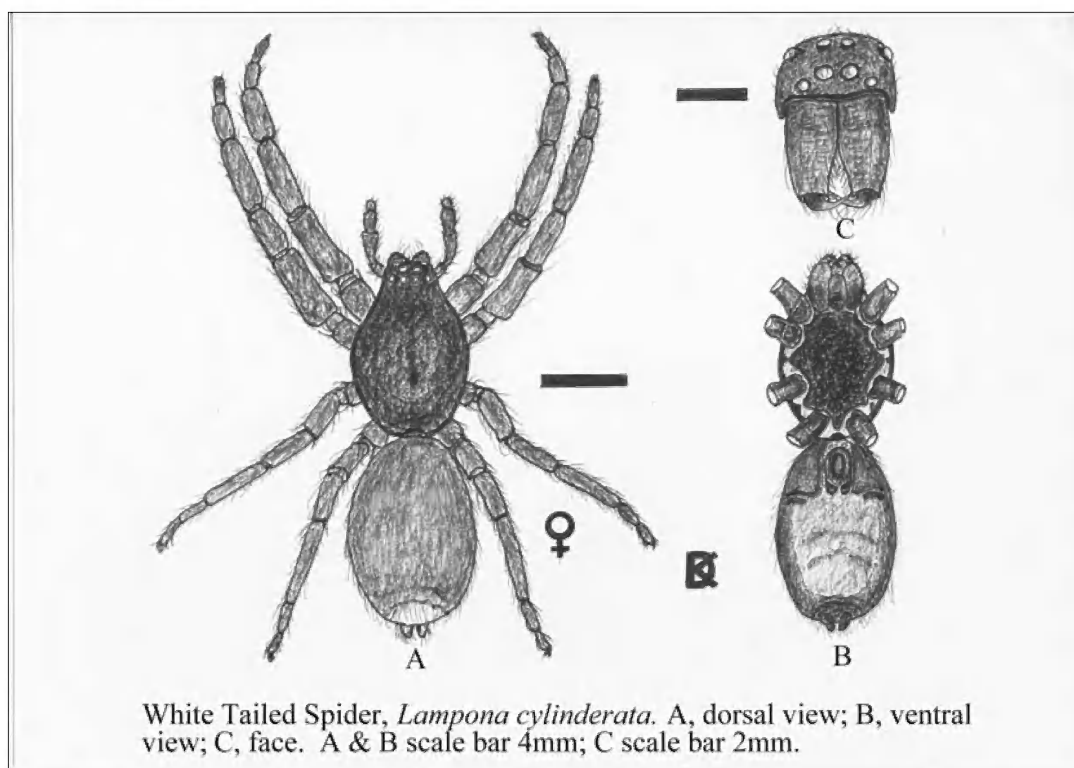
black and abdomen dark grey. The prograde legs are dark orange colour, and have scopulae on the tarsi enabling easy traction on smooth vertical surfaces. The most distinctive feature is the white patch on the posterior tip of the abdomen. Two pale spots may also be observed on the mid-dorsal area of the abdomen, which tend to diminish in clarity with each successive moult. The ventral plate of the cephalothorax, the sternum, is bluish black and emarginate with a border of white. Eight eyes are in two rows of four; the anterior row is procurved with the median pair of eyes larger than all the others are.

The ventral surface of the abdomen carries a large area of grey, and at the anterior end an unusually large chitin process of a shield shape. This is the female epigynum or external genitalia. Sperm is transferred by the male palps into the female copulatory opening, thence by a duct to the spermatheca (Gk. *Sperma*, seed; *théké*, case) where the sperm is stored. When being laid, the eggs travel from the ovaries through a different duct, passing the spermatheca that dispenses sperm to fertilise the eggs. This form of epigynum (Griswold, 1999) is known as entelegyne (Gk. *En*, in; *telos*, end; *echein*, to hold). Four equal size spinnerets are placed at the posterior tip of the abdomen, the silk is used to construct a retreat and form a disc shaped egg sac.

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Assisted Reproduction Programs

A talk given at the General Meeting 5 July 2005
by Professor David Galloway

...Roy Whiteside

The speaker has been with the University of Melbourne for about 35 years in teaching, research and clinical work mainly with domestic animals but also with endangered wild animals. His main interests are in male reproduction, male fertility and infertility, artificial insemination and the more recent technology of embryo transfer including cloning. He also works as a Senior Research Fellow at the Monash Institute of Medical Research (formerly the Monash Centre of Reproduction and Development) in a number of technologies involving endangered species. The techniques used in the exploration of reproductive biology with domestic animals is, in general, transferable to wild animals but with some difficulty.

Professor Galloway stressed that all work done with mammals and fish is overseen by an ethics committee.

Western Lowland Gorillas

Gorillas are an endangered species and future survival depends on retaining habitats (i.e. without predators and with an appropriate natural environment) and maintaining critical numbers of the species. In the early days of the gorillas introduced to Melbourne Zoo, a male, Rigo and female, Yuska who were together in their enclosure were not interested in breeding. An examination of Rigo while under anaesthetic found that he was fertile.

Sperm was collected from Rigo by stimulating the prostate gland whilst under anaesthetic. This technique is also used with domestic animals and paraplegic humans to produce ejaculation. The ovulation cycle of Yuska was studied for about one year by collecting regular urine samples from drains in the night quarters and examining the hormone content. This avoided having to take blood samples. Mzuri was born in 1984 at Melbourne Zoo as a result of artificial insemination of Yuska by sperm from Rigo. Mzuri, now aged 21, is now breeding very satisfactorily. There have been other breeding successes

with this gorilla species at the Sydney and Jersey Zoos.

Bison herd at Werribee Zoo.

An interesting story was related concerning two bulls in a herd in 1988. In nature the dominant male sires the most calves and it was decided to take the dominant male out of the herd but to leave the younger and smaller male. The dominant male was darted in order to tranquillise it. At first he decided to ignore it but after some time this bull stumbled as the anaesthetic started to take effect. The younger bull saw a weakness and charged the dominant bull who was rather battered and had to be removed by a front-end loader. The lesson to be learned from this was that both bulls should have been tranquillised!

Alpacas

These are a type of camel from South America and technology has been developed to improve wool production in these animals on the Bellarine Peninsula. An attempt has been made to provide artificial insemination for these animals and has proved to be difficult. It has proved easy to collect semen but it will not freeze in the same way as bull's semen. There are still people investigating that and finding out what techniques they can use to freeze alpaca semen. In the meantime there has been research into the alternative of embryo transfer. This is achieved by super-ovulating the female to produce numerous eggs and then to fertilise these eggs by natural mating. The resulting embryos are surgically removed from the uterus and transferred to surrogate females. With this method many offspring are produced from one special female and one special male with the objective of improving wool production.

Sharks

The Grey Nurse Shark is endangered on the east and southern coasts of Australia but is less rare on the coast of West Australia. The mechanisms of shark reproduction vary somewhat

from one species to another. In the Grey Nurse Shark the female is ovoviviparous which means that eggs hatch in the uterus. Embryo number 1 then eats embryos 2 to 6 and then eats eggs which are continually ovulated during pregnancy. This can be described as inter-uterine cannibalism. At the end of gestation, which lasts about a year, a metre long pup with a taste for fish leaves the mother. There are usually two pups born from each side of the uterus. The female shark does not mate for another year after reproducing which means that the average annual offspring per female shark is about one.

Professor Galloway is supervising a Monash post-graduate student studying reproduction in the larger sharks at the Melbourne Aquarium. The three Grey Nurse Sharks at the aquarium are not being interfered with because of their endangered status. However, research is being done with surrogate species in the form of Seven-gill and Wobbegong sharks. The Seven-gill Shark has large litters and embryos are sustained *in utero* from yoke sac material so siblings do not have to be eaten. These sharks are carefully caught and turned upside down where they usually stay quiet. It is proposed to collect semen from an anaesthetised male shark and to fertilise an ovulating female in case they have not mated. The foetal spines of Seven-gill Sharks are examined by ultra-sound to confirm pregnancy.

Work is also being done at the Queenscliff Marine Science laboratory where Terry Walker has given permission for research to be done on a small colony of Stingarees. These fish are similar to stingrays and are easy to work with in comparison with the much larger Seven-gill and Grey-nurse Sharks. Semen is collected from the Stingarees by a massage method and a successful technique has been devised to dilute the semen and preserve it by deep freezing.

Continued on next page

The structure of the spermatazoa of a Grey-nurse Shark is very peculiar and differs in structure from a mammalian sperm. There is a spiral-shaped head, a mid-piece and a tail. The spermatazoa do not swim forward and it is not known how they find and penetrate oocytes (ova), but it is thought that a corkscrew action is involved.

Domestic animals and temperature dependence

Professor Galloway explained some of his work with bulls at Genetics Australia at Bacchus Marsh. At this property there are about 200 bulls. It has been found that there is a drop in semen quality in the hot conditions of summer. This is fairly predictable because nature goes to a lot of trouble to keep testicles cool. In bulls and rams the cord which holds the testicle in the scrotum has a counter cooling mechanism. The warm arterial blood which goes down is cooled by the venous blood return as it goes up. In addition, there is an evaporative cooling process via specialised sweat glands on the scrotum. An examination of summer temperatures at Bacchus Marsh revealed numerous daily peaks between 35 and 40 degrees throughout the summer period. The bulls are mostly Holstein Friesien and originated from northern Germany and Denmark. Three types of accommodation for bulls (ranging from 3-star to 5-star!) are:

1. the traditional way consisting of a paddock and a shed with no cooling.

2. A shed with a fine water spray with fans for cooling the bulls which works quite well but it wasn't really good enough for the very hot days and for certain sensitive bulls.

3. An air-conditioned shed with room for four top bulls with the temperature kept at 20 degrees maintains good semen quality in these bulls.

Temperature dependence for sharks

It is thought that maintaining appropriate temperatures for Grey-nurse Sharks could also be useful in improving fertility. For instance, at the Mooloolaba Aquarium the water temperature is maintained between 20 and 22 degrees and the sharks mate but at the Melbourne Aquarium, where the temperature is maintained a little lower, these sharks do not

mate. In the wild it is known that these sharks migrate north to warmer waters to mate but then travel south to Victorian waters to give birth to pups. It is not possible to increase the water temperature at the Melbourne Aquarium because the cold water species would be at risk of dying. The best surrogate species at Melbourne is Wobbegong Shark because this species lies on the bottom and are very quiet and have conditions suitable for breeding.

Cloning

This is now possible and has been done in New Zealand. We have a few cloned animals but we can't do anything with them because public opinion has dictated that we are not interested in genetically modified food at this stage. The technology is there and it may possible to use it for some endangered species. In dairying it is very easy not to go too far into inbreeding so that we have all the one genetic composition. With our wild animals there would also be a very big danger to get inbreeding through cloning.

Wombats

Some work has been done with the Common Wombat at the Veterinary School where there is also a big experimental colony of sheep, cattle etcetera. The Common Wombat still has a substantial range of habitat but the Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat and Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat have very limited habitats and very low remaining populations. One of the ways in which populations of the Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat might be increased is by embryo transfer. We need to find out if the system used for cattle also works for wild animals like a wombat. An ovary is stimulated by hormones to produce more follicle cells. After fertilising it might be possible to transfer the resulting embryos into surrogate Common Wombat mothers.

Quolls

Some work has been done with these animals. They are difficult animals to work with as they have very sharp teeth. Current work comprises reproductive studies and examination of DNA to look at the species differences and the degree of inbreeding.

New Holland Mouse

This species used to be present at Anglesea. The Melbourne Zoo has a project to try to get this species back in the wild but foxes and feral cats make the task almost impossible.

Kangaroo reproduction

The animals on the Anglesea Golf Course are breeding very well at present. The female kangaroo is very clever at breeding as it has an embryonic diapause capability. It can hold an embryo in suspended animation in its oviduct during drought and then after it rains the embryo resumes feeding. There are two nipples in the pouch and each can simultaneously produce different compositions of milk, one for sustaining an undeveloped embryo and the other for sustaining a 'teenager' which periodically hops into the pouch for a feed. There is some research being carried out to look at the genetics of milk production in kangaroos. There may be a possibility of manipulating the genetics of domestic cows to produce different types of milk for human consumption!

Following a short question session a vote of thanks was given by Deborah Evans.

21st Birthday Celebration

You are invited to a Buckley Falls Evening

**8 p.m. on Thursday 11 August
Geelong Botanic Gardens
Friends Meeting Room**

Guest Speaker: Geoff Carr

The evening is a celebration of the 21st Anniversary of the commencement of the restoration of Buckley Falls Park and of the work carried out by community groups, councils, government authorities and industry to achieve a magnificent parkland in urban Geelong. In August 1984 the well known botanist Geoff Carr gave the Geelong Environment Council an inspiring talk on the values of the Buckley Falls area and the urgent need for weed removal and a revegetation program to be commenced. Now, 21 years later, Geoff Carr will again talk on the many values of the Buckley Falls area and the tasks ahead.

A festive supper is provided.

Eucalypts of Geelong

1. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* River Red Gum

...Valda Dedman

Eucalyptus camaldulensis, River Red Gum, is the most extensively planted eucalypt in the world and has the most widespread distribution of any in Australia, growing even in desert regions. It occurs naturally from Cooktown to Cape Howe, but not in Tasmania and not in the south-west of the continent, and you won't find it in most of Gippsland, where it is replaced by the Forest Red Gum *E. tereticornis*. It is known from many areas around Geelong, but it does not grow in the Otways, nor along the surf coast. The species was first described in 1832 by the German Frederick Dehnhardt, head gardener to the Count of Camalduli, near Naples in Italy, where seedling Red Gums were growing. It is not known who first collected it. Early explorers in Australia, such as Thomas Mitchell, called it *E. rostrata*, which name it had been given in 1847 by Dietrich von Schlechtendal, director of the botanic gardens at the University of Halle.

'Rostrata' describes the Red Gum's buds, which are small (3–6 mm wide) and round, with a pronounced 'beak'. There are 7–11 buds in a cluster, on slender pedicels (stems). Buds appear in leaf axils in November, 9–12 months before flowering. The fruit, with their ascending disc and strongly exerted valves, look like miniature crowns. Seed is yellow or yellow-brown.



Fruit of River Red Gum
Eucalyptus camaldulensis

River Red Gums are sturdy trees, with solid limbs, often gnarled and twisted. The crown is large and spreading, usually greater in height than the trunk. You find them leaning on the edge of streams, roots exposed, surrounding a wetland or standing in the middle of a dry outback creek bed, sometimes even as woodlands out on the open plains, but always where the roots can easily get to water. They need a good flood from time to time, but can't stand permanently in water, as the dead stags in man-made water storages testify. The fringe of seedling trees around dried-up lakes and billabongs is a flood-level indicator, where floating fruits finally came to rest and released seed in lovely damp soil as the water retreated. Red Gums do not have lignotubers and replace

themselves from seed after flood damage. The smooth bark is shed annually in large flakes, revealing mottled greys, buff and cream. A painter's dream.

It is not wise to camp beneath them, since a limb can break off without warning, maybe weakened by insect attack. It has been claimed that the extra weight of flower buds transformed and enlarged to woody galls has caused branches to fall. Rutherglen Bugs *Nysius vinitor* have been blamed by beekeepers for 'stealing' nectar and causing a stink that repels bees. It is said that Red Gums along the Little River died because of Cup Moth infestation, although drought and rising salinity may have contributed to their death. It's not often that you find a Red Gum leaf that does not show some evidence of insect attack and yet the trees can live in harmony with an enormous free-loading population. A count of insects on a single Red Gum beside the Murray River in February 1999 came to 8500 individuals of 540 species. Trees can live for 200 or even 300 years.

Adult leaves are long and narrow, lance-shaped, of a dull, sometimes even a greyish green, although new growth is bright green. Juvenile leaves are generally broader than adult leaves. They are stemless and opposite at first but soon become alternate, with stems.

Red Gums are prolific pollen and nectar producers, much prized by beekeepers (and lorikeets and honeyeaters). The honey is straw-coloured and mild-flavoured. The trees flower most years, some years exceptionally heavily, followed by a very light crop. Late spring to mid-summer is the time to look for their small pale-cream flowers.

Aborigines cut off sheets of bark for canoes and coolamons and used the dark red wood for tools. The wood is hard and durable, resistant to termites and decay,



E. camaldulensis near the river at Balyang Sanctuary

Continued next page...

and an excellent fuel, so it has been used for house stumps and railway sleepers, flooring and firewood (it fuelled the paddle steamers). Early settlers in Geelong looked upon the River Red Gums along the Barwon as a resource and cut them down with scant thought to the future. For 80–100 years there was little seedling recruitment. It was not until Barwon Water stepped in during the late 1980s that much revegetation took place. Since then, however, 20 000 River Red Gums have been planted along the urban reaches of the river. Downstream of Geelong, especially, older trees need special care if they are to survive to splendid maturity. A survey of trees older than 50 years along the urban Barwon found that more than 25% had declined in overall health between 1997 and 2003. Riverbank erosion due mainly to grazing was a major factor, but trees showed stress even in urban parkland. River Red Gums in Balyang Sanctuary are now wearing plastic 'possum collars' to help crown regeneration.

There are still some fine local examples of River Red Gums at Balyang Sanctuary, at Queens Park and at the You Yangs, near the visitor centre. Magnificent specimens still survive in paddocks, but there are no young trees coming along to replace them. Look for ancient trees near Moriac or Teesdale; they may not survive development pressures. A tiny remnant of Red Gum woodland beside the Gheringhap-Fyansford Road was fenced off from stock some years ago by the Fyansford-Stonehaven Landcare Group and many seedling trees are now growing there.



The fate of two old River Red Gums, at the edge of Barwon Heads Road, just beyond KMart, is uncertain. Technically, they are on Belmont Common and so deserve our special protection.

Photographs: Valda Dedman

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River Red Gum on Barwon Heads Road, Belmont

Thoughts on planting River Red Gums by Joyce Hunt

*Now in my hand a dollar's worth of trees,
 Ten inches tall, and scarce a hundred leaves between them all.
 A hundred years from now, when we are dust,
 Magnificent, wide-spread, these trees will stand
 Regal and tall.*

*I see a wedgetail eagle sitting here
 Full fifty feet up, watching his prey;
 And gang-gangs, passing through, may stay awhile.
 Rosellas, living rainbows, face the sun
 In gorgeous splendour.*

*And cheeky little robins, flame-red fays,
 Will brighten up the dismal winter days.
 Magpies will nest herein, and, carolling,
 Will fill the air for miles around with song.
 The creek will ring with laughter through the years
 As kookaburras chuckle gleefully
 And teach their young to laugh.*

*Nocturnal creatures, timid and wide-eyed
 Gliders and possums here will find a home;
 While welcome shade and shelter will be found
 By weary man.*

*A hundred years from now these trees will be
 But middle-aged, and twice a hundred years
 Hence, nature lovers, coming here, may bless
 The long-forgotten ones who now dig, fence,
 And plant with toil-worn hands
 For generations yet to come.*

*Now, in my hand a dollar's worth of trees...
 A living monument in years ahead!
 So, happily, with joy and thankfulness,
 We kneel to plant Red Gums beside the creek,*

Reproduced from *Geelong Naturalist* Vol.9, No.1. May 1972
 Joyce Hunt was a member of GFNC.

Getting to know the Club's volunteers Claire Greenwell

Claire's love of natural history was, she says, by 'osmosis'.

Claire was one of the last babies born in the little Bush Nursing Hospital (house) next door to the Royal Hotel in King Street, Queenscliff, Victoria. Her parents were fortunate to have been sent south just before Darwin was bombed. However, after her father was discharged from the Army, her mother wanted to return to Central Australia. (She had been born in a log cabin 80 km south of Alice Springs and had roamed the surrounding countryside with her brother and their aboriginal companions from whom they learned bush craft and what bush tucker was safe to eat.)

Life in Alice Springs during the 1950s was a wonderful, carefree time. Weekends (and school holidays that were spent 'in town' and not on her aunt's cattle station 200 km north east of Alice Springs) was time to spend 'down the creek' in the Todd River digging 'soaks' in the sand, eating 'prillya' (lerp scale) found on the River Gum leaves or roam the surrounding countryside looking out for Bloodwood Apples, 'lungwa' (Bush Banana), figs and Corkwood tree or Grevillia blossom full of nectar, or whatever else was safe to eat. Claire would bring home flowers for her mother, no matter how overpowering the smell.

Before WW2, Claire's grandfather had been forced by drought to abandon

Deep Well Station and became involved in gold and mica mining and Claire has some of his collection of specimens.

Claire married Hugh McCormick in 1961 and has two sons. During the 1970s, she and her family moved to Pomonal near the Grampians to join her parents growing flowers for florists. *Thryptomene* and *Boronia* were amongst the 30 different species cultivated, and although the *Thryptomene* grew wild on the property, it was also propagated. Half of the 40 acres was uncleared natural bush and this was delight to walk through in any season but especially in spring when orchids and other indigenous flowers were blooming.

In the 1980s after the break-up of her marriage, Claire completed a course at the Warrnambool TAFE College in Applied Art (Tapestry Weaving) before moving to Geelong to become a Field Worker with a community mental health organisation. This meant driving to towns all around south-western Victoria to attend meetings—her favourite group was the one at the old Geelong Gaol!

Claire met Dennis Greenwell in 1989, and says she was mortified that a 'Pom' could identify more Australian birds than she could! On their first 'date'—a drive in the bush—he leapt out of his car to cut the head off a very large (dead) feral tom cat saying

he just had to have its skull, which didn't faze her at all! She then told him that people had told her she was 'bizarre' for keeping duckling embryos from eggs that had failed to hatch on the farm. Den's major interest was in Lepidoptera and he loved the bush and 'the outback' as she did so they decided, after invitations from Dave and Betty King (at Ocean Grove Nature Reserve) and Ian Woodland (Point Addis beach), to join the GFNC to further their knowledge and friendship; they married six years ago after a 10 year 'engagement'... and the rest is history!

After joining the Committee and taking on the positions of Minute Secretary, Vice President and President, Claire edited the *Geelong Naturalist* for five years. She is at present the reluctant Librarian. During the 1990s she was also a guide at Serendip Sanctuary at Lara and painted a mural on two walls of the Activities room.

Claire's interests these days include macro photography (with her digital camera), reading and writing (she fell in love with computers 10 years ago), as well as her five granddaughters, three step-grandchildren and two double step-grandchildren—although the new 4WD and caravan (A'van) means that the call of the bush, and especially 'the outback', is going to be answered as often as possible!



Excursion to Swan Bay catchment Sunday 17 July

...Dick Southcombe

After meeting Sue Longmore—Facilitator, Swan Bay Catchment Committee—at the Queenscliff Railway Station, we visited three quite different habitats: coastal dunes at The Narrows, extensive saltmarsh at the Murray Road boardwalk and a variety of vegetation communities at Lake Victoria. The sand dune blow-out at the end of The Narrows rock wall demonstrates the destruction which occurs when inappropriate man-made structures interfere with the natural world. Sand is smothering the Moonah woodland. Those who care for the Murray Road saltmarsh

are to be congratulated; the boardwalk and signage combine to protect and inform, bare ground has been revegetated with niche plantings and it won't be long before the cover is complete on this shore of Swan Bay. It is unfortunate that an area of Swan Bay in this vicinity is NOT INCLUDED in the Marine Park because of an oversight when the RAMSAR Wetland site was declared. This anomaly really needs correcting because it enables inappropriate use within the Bay. As a stroll through the range of plant communities and ephemeral wetlands at Lake Victoria

is usually pleasant and rewarding we decided to walk the southern shore despite facing inclement weather. Along the way we noticed *Amyema pressii* Wire-leaf Mistletoe in flower and growing on *Acacia retinodes* var. *uncifolia* Coast Wirilda—a plant of State Significance being parasitised by a plant of Regional Significance. The only bird seen, a Great Egret, was sheltering behind a bank near the golf course. We wondered about the future of its habitat. Like sensible animals we turned our backs to the driving rain and hiked back to our cars.

Mid-week Bird Group Excursion, 21 July 2005 Stephens Road Bushland, Bannockburn

...Gordon McCarthy

The day dawned with patches of fog and white frost, which predicted a fine day to come and so it turned out, a beautiful windless winter day. The early cold didn't deter 17 keen observers who met at the Bannockburn Bush entrance on the Shelford Road. Tom was early and already had a short list. After a short walk under the large old Yellow Gums we proceeded to the Barwon Water owned Stephen's Road Bushland.

We were fortunate to be joined by Geoff Jones (Project Officer, Natural Resource Services, Barwon Water). Geoff is a member of GFNC. We were able to drive in to the ponds and park in an area that also provided toilet facilities. A large raft of Eurasian Coots were patrolling the west pond, along with Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal,

Pink-eared Ducks and Australian Wood Ducks. Peter spotted a lone male Australasian Shoveler amongst the Hardheads. A highlight was the beautiful little song of two Flame Robins. Barwon Water has planted hundreds of trees in the adjoining paddocks, which will be good for the future and the water table.

In the north-east corner of the block is a small stand of mature Red Gums which, among other birds, produced a pair of Crested Shrike-tits. From here we walked through the open woodland of Yellow Gums and Manna Gums, with thickets of *Acacia paradoxa*, checking on some of the nest boxes installed by Barwon Water. Unfortunately a number of these had become dislodged, but were being replaced by Geoff. We

looked in vain for the resident Australian Owlet-nightjar. Good views were had of Restless Flycatchers and Eastern Yellow Robins. The weather remained kind so we walked around the edges, in the sun as much as possible, and the birds had the same idea. The bird list for the day was 59 species (see below).

The only problem for the day was when the 'leader', looking for fresh habitat in the low-lying area of the block, led his trusting followers into a jungle of *A. paradoxa* which appeared endless; but eventually we reached open ground.

We are indeed fortunate that this block of rare open woodland is reserved.



Bird list

Australian Shelduck; 1 at sewage ponds

Australian Wood Duck

Pacific Black Duck

Australasian Shoveler; 1 on sewage ponds

Grey Teal; sewage ponds

Chestnut Teal; sewage ponds

Pink-eared Duck; 7 on sewage ponds

Hardhead; sewage ponds

Hoary-headed Grebe; sewage ponds

Little Pied Cormorant

Wedge-tailed Eagle; 1 overhead

Brown Falcon

Nankeen Kestrel

Eurasian Coot; sewage ponds

Masked Lapwing

Rock Dove/Domestic Pigeon

Galah

Long-billed Corella

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

Purple-crowned Lorikeet

Crimson Rosella

Eastern Rosella

Red-rumped Parrot

Fan-tailed Cuckoo

Laughing Kookaburra

White-throated Treecreeper; 3 in Stephens Rd bushland

Superb Fairy-wren

Spotted Pardalote

Striated Pardalote

Weebill; 7 in Stephens Rd bushland

Brown Thornbill

Yellow-rumped Thornbill

Red Wattlebird

Yellow-faced Honeyeater

White-eared Honeyeater

White-plumed Honeyeater

Brown-headed Honeyeater; flock of 8-10

White-naped Honeyeater; only 1

New Holland Honeyeater

Jacky Winter; 3 were seen later on E side of golf course (Rob Ganly, Marilyn and Dean Hewish)

Flame Robin; 3 brown birds, 2 sang continually from trees along N

edge of Stephens Rd bushland

Eastern Yellow Robin

Varied Sittella

Crested Shrike-tit

Golden Whistler

Grey Shrike-thrush

Restless Flycatcher; 4 in Stephens Rd bushland and adjoining River Red Gum woodland

Grey Fantail

Willie Wagtail

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike

Australian Magpie

Little Raven

White-winged Chough; flock of 11 in line of trees in paddocks N of Stephens Rd bushland, later flew back into Water Reserve woodland

Skylark

Richard's Pipit

Red-browed Finch

Welcome Swallow

Common Blackbird

Common Starling

Jerringot Report

...Valda Dedman

The Snipe should be on their way from Japan. Who will be the first to see them at Jerringot? We need to know because Snipefest will be held on 11 October to celebrate their return to Geelong. Helpers will be needed on that day for face painting

and mask making, as well as looking for snipe food and of course going on a snipe walk. Please let Valda (5243 2374 dedmanv@iprimus.com.au) or Dave (5243 9136 kingdf@optusnet.com.au) know if you are available.

The COGG Spring Planting Festival will be held the Sunday before

Snipefest, when it is hoped to get 400 plants into the ground around Jerringot, including near the far north 'pond'. I would also like to get a microbat monitoring project underway, with Grant Baverstock's advice and support. Neil McInnes has already built 7 bat boxes to an approved design. Is anyone else interested?

Bird Observations July 2005

... *Barry Lingham*

The Geelong Field Naturalists record observations of wildlife from Cape Otway to Bacchus Marsh and across to the Bellarine Peninsula (we do not record the Werribee Treatment Complex as it is well studied by other groups). The records from this month cover most of our area, with many interesting sightings. The numbers of Freckled Duck at Lake Lorne have declined after the recent rains to the north, but there were still plenty there in late June. There have been several reports of ocean birds, with some albatross coming closer to our shores as they tend to do in winter. The sighting of a Sooty Albatross off Thirteenth Beach is highly unusual. Another rarely seen, cryptic bird is the Lewin's Rail, but one was spotted beside the road near Wallington (it was not there the day after when I tried to find it!). There are many reports of birds in our region that would usually be expected to have shifted north for the winter. Dusky Woodswallows, Fan-tailed Cuckoos, Horsfields Bronze-Cuckoos and Shining Bronze-Cuckoos have all been recorded. A flock of 80+ Curlew Sandpiper is a large number of birds to be recorded during winter. The breeding season is not far away and some records of nesting behaviour have been noted. Keep an eye out over the next few months and note any breeding behaviour. It is particularly useful to note when the birds first build nests, start to brood, hatch eggs and finally fledge the young. We encourage reports of unusual behaviour by birds and any records of the food that birds are eating. The interesting record of the Darter eating a carp fits both categories.

Observers were: BA_t, Bryant Attwood; BL, Barry Lingham; CDo, Curtis Doughty; CMo, Craig Morley; DHe, Dean Hewish; GGb, Gavin Gamble; GFNC, Geelong Field Naturalist Club excursion; GMc, Gordon McCarthy; JN, John Newman; KC, Kay Campbell; MHe, Marilyn Hewish; MDo, Melissa Doherty; PF, Pauline Fletcher; RGa, Rob Ganly; RK, Rachel Keary; RMc, Rob Mackenzie; SSi, Sheila Silver; TFI, Tom Fletcher

Species	Number	Date	Comments	Observer
Freckled Duck	400±	23/6	Lake Lorne, Drysdale. Much reduced in numbers, maybe because of recent inland rains. 225± present 2/7.	RMc
	13	2/7	Serendip	GMc
Fluttering Shearwater	700-800	24/7	Cape Otway, flying W in small scattered groups and strung-out flocks of up to 150 birds over 3 hours.	RMc, MHe
Black-browed Albatross	5 or 6	24/6	Cape Otway. MHe saw one immature bird.	RMc, MHe
Shy Albatross	40±	24/6	Cape Otway, scattered, from fairly close in to well offshore.	RMc, MHe
	Present	21/7	Thirteenth Beach, between The Bluff and Black Rocks, not far offshore, gliding westerly. Fine day with calm seas.	TFI, PF
Yellow-nosed Albatross	1	24/6	Cape Otway	RMc, MHe
Sooty Albatross	1	21/7	Thirteenth Beach, between The Bluff and Black Rocks, not far offshore, gliding westerly. Fine day with calm seas.	TFI, PF
Darter	1	19/7	Queens Park, near footbridge—had caught a fish (carp) approx. 20 cm x 8 cm, and was having trouble with it. With lower mandible through gills and upper on top of the fish's head the bird shook the fish and hit it on a log until fish slowed down. After 15 minutes or so with the Darter's neck at maximum stretch the fish vanished from view but the bird's neck was fish-shaped for a long while. Unbelievable!	BA _t
Australasian Bittern	1	28/6	Reedy Lake E—flew from reeds between O'Halloran's and Fitzgerald's Lanes.	RMc
Spotted Harrier	1	16/6	Little River Earth Sanctuary	KC, SSi, CDo
	2	1/7	Balliang, alongside Bacchus Marsh Road at 1400.	RGa
Grey Goshawk	1	4/7	Ocean Grove Nature Reserve—flew from hide area, West Track, W to large trees in watercourse, landed, then followed treeline NW.	TFI
	1	17/7	Gnarwarre, perched atop bare pine tree. White morph.	BA _t
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	30/6	Barwon Heads—Geelong Road, Connearre, flying S with shallow and light wing beats, high over road	CMo
	1	9/7	Vista Road, Newtown. A low direct flight at treetop height to the NW at 0730. Prolonged alarm calling of New Holland Honeyeaters.	CMo
Australian Hobby	2	23/6	Lake Lorne, Drysdale—flew across at high speed.	RMc
	1	26/6	Star of the Sea Church, Ocean Grove, a bird in low, rapid and direct flight at treetop height at 0845.	CMo
	1	3/7	Little River Bridge, Melbourne Road	RGa
Peregrine Falcon	1	3/7	Woodlands Estate, Ocean Grove, a female flying low towards Ocean Grove Nature Reserve.	TFI
Lewin's Rail	1	15/7	Wallington, beside the Wallington—Ocean Grove Road, west side, a few metres off road and approx. 200 m from Bellarine Highway, feeding in mown grass verge. Not concerned about traffic.	TFI
Black-tailed Native-hen	4	2/7	Serendip	GMc
Eurasian Coot	600±	5/7	Brisbane Ranges, at Durdidwarrah S reservoir— when attacked by a Swamp Harrier which made low passes over them they simultaneously sent up a spectacular spray of water, presumably as a 'smoke-screen'.	RMc
Ruddy Turnstone	9	26/6	Edwards Point Reserve, with other waders.	RMc

Species	Number	Date	Comments	Observer
Curllew Sandpiper	1	26/6	Edwards Point Reserve, with other waders.	RMc
	80+	3/7	Lake Connewarre, in a tight flock on private land on Groves Road.	JN
Black-fronted Dotterel	6	28/6	Reedy Lake E, with 3 Red-kneed Dotterels.	RMc
Hooded Plover	2	24/6	Apollo Bay, on sand spit near river mouth.	RMc, MHe, DHe
Red-kneed Dotterel	3	28/6	Reedy Lake E, with 6 Black-fronted Dotterels.	RMc
Fairy Tern	1	26/6	Edwards Point Reserve, feeding on the point.	RMc
Peaceful Dove	2	17/6	Long Forest, Long Point, perched together.	MHe, DHe
Long-billed Corella	200+	19/7	Chinamans Lagoon, Teesdale. Regular evening grouping on moonlit nights, not flying off to roosts. Carousing noisily from 0200 onwards.	GGb
Little Corella	200	18/6	Long Forest, Djerriwarrh Track—flew SW before sunrise.	MHe
	600	28/6	Bacchus Marsh, on N outskirts—flew NW at dusk.	MHe, DHe
Red-rumped Parrot	30+	4/7	Queens Park, along river walk.	BAt
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	20/6	Queens Park, calling at 0930. Two at 0800 on 21/7.	BAt
	4+	27/6	Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, all calling at once within earshot of each other, near corner of North and West Tracks. Present each day up to 21/7.	TFI
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	1	19/6	Lake Merrimu Picnic Ground. Also 26/6.	MHe
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	18/7	Links Road, Inverleigh Flora and Fauna Reserve, heard calling.	GGb
Southern Boobook	1	16/6	Little River Earth Sanctuary, roosting in palm tree with Barn Owl.	MDo, GFNC
	1	12/7	Batesford, perched in dense foliage in young gum tree, did not move while we ate lunch 8 m away.	RGa, KC
Barn Owl	1	16/6	Little River Earth Sanctuary, roosting in palm tree with Southern Boobook.	MDo, GFNC
Spotted Pardalote	1	23/6	Ocean Grove Nature Reserve—an adult male excavating nest tunnel in bottom of 'root ball' of fallen tree.	RMc
Southern Whiteface	2	16/6	Little River Earth Sanctuary	GFNC
Little Wattlebird	1	24/6	Apollo Bay—flew into a heavily-flowering <i>Banksia integrifolia</i> .	RMc
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	2	17/6	Queens Park, eating fruit of Kangaroo Apple near the footbridge. Up to 6 seen since 31/5 and still present 21/7. Some birds have moved to the area of the middle footbridge.	BAt
White-naped Honeyeater	1	20/6	Queens Park, near river. 2 flew from golf course and rested briefly in bare tree at 0845 on 30/6.	BAt
Jacky Winter	3	19/6	W of Long Forest, perched on fence, olive grove and open fields.	MHe, DHe
	2	5/7	Brisbane Ranges, on fences near corner of Ballan and Durdidwarrah Roads.	RMc
Scarlet Robin	20	5/7	Brisbane Ranges—total seen for the day.	RMc
Flame Robin	15	23/6	Ocean Grove Nature Reserve—7 males and 8 brown birds, all on ploughed land just N of the reserve.	RMc
	3	28/6	Reedy Lake E—3 brown birds, along Fitzgerald's Lane.	RMc
	5	2/7	Curllewis—5 brown birds along rail trail between Wallington-Curllewis and Jetty Roads.	RMc
	20	2/7	S end of Hovells Creek, You Yangs, 3 male and 17 brown. Have not been numerous this year.	MHe, DHe
	4	12/7	Dog Rocks Road, Batesford—all brown birds.	KC, RGA
	7	17/7	Gnarwarre Road, Gnarwarre, on road and verge. Included 3 male birds.	BAt
	1	21/6	Queens Park, a brown bird high in pine tree with Grey Fantail.	BAt
Variied Sittella	4	5/7	Brisbane Ranges, a flock, on Geelong/Furze Tracks circuit.	RMc
Dusky Woodswallow	7	21/6	Bacchus Marsh Railway Station.	MHe, DHe
	3	22/6	Barros Dams, You Yangs	MHe, DHe
	10	23/6	E of Parwan	MHe, DHe
	12	30/6	Long Forest, Long Point	MHe, DHe
Diamond Firetail	30	16/6	Little River Earth Sanctuary	GFNC
Tree Martin	400+	18/7	Alcoa wetlands, Point Henry, feverishly hawking insects over the major 'CPL' pond for at least 1½ hours. Not usually seen in this location	RGa
Brown Songlark	2	5/7	Mount Duneed, male and female, in grass paddock between fence and gorse bushes, with White-fronted Chats and Willie Wagtails.	RK
Bassian Thrush	1	24/6	Beauchamp Falls, Otway Ranges—feeding on ground at picnic area and observed 'stamping' its foot and then throwing aside leaf litter in search of food.	RMc, MHe, DHe
	1	4/7	Geelong Botanic Gardens, moving through the fern area.	BL

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Conservation Group	Dick Southcombe	5243 3916
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Librarian	Claire Greenwell	5243 7047
Mammal Study Group	Trevor Pescott	5243 4368
Membership Officer	Jan Venters	5222 2830
Plant Group	Dick Southcombe	5243 3916
Web-master	Barry Lingham	5255 4291

Coming Events

AUGUST 2005	SEPTEMBER 2005
2 General Meeting: Members night	8 General Meeting: Kylie Annett 'Small mammals and fungi'
9 Plant Group: Local Eucalypts	13 Plant Group
18 Mid-week Bird Group Excursion: Lake Modewarre and Lake Wurdiboluc. Leader: Kay Campbell	15 Mid-week Bird Group Excursion: Buckley Falls area. Leader: Bryant Attwood
18 Bird Group: Bretan Clifford 'Mapping bird sightings'	15 Bird Group: Wayne Longmore 'Feathered Friends'
21 Excursion: Angahook-Lorne State Park	18 Excursion: Brisbane Ranges/Stony Creek. Leader: Dick Southcombe
27-28 Boneseed pull—You Yangs. Leaders: Rob Beardsley, Claire and Dennis Greenwell	30-Oct 3 Club Campout: Homerton State Forest
TBA Mammal Group: Survey	

***The closing date for the next magazine will be Monday evening, 29 August 2005,
Early lodgement of articles (small & large) would be a great help—late copy may not be accepted.
Hard copy or diskette (saved as a Word document or .rtf please)
Photographs—digital as .jpg (100 to 250 KB approx. if sending by e-mail), slides or prints for scanning to
5 James Cook Dve Wandana Heights, 3216 —OR—e-mail: lphelan@bigpond.com.au
For further details phone Lorraine Phelan: 5243 0636***

The latest editions of the following references are recommended:

- Birds:** Christidis, L. & Boles, W. (1994) *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*, Royal Ornithologist Union Monograph 2, RAOU, Melbourne.
- Invertebrates:** CSIRO (1991) *The Insects of Australia: A Textbook for Students & Research Workers*, Vol 1 & 2, MUP, Melbourne.
- Mammals:** Menkhorst, P.W. (ed.) (1995) *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Australia*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.
- Plants:** Ross, J.H. & Walsh, N.G. (eds) (2003) *A Census of the Vascular Plants of Victoria*, Royal Botanic Gardens of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Reptiles and Amphibians:** Cogger, H. (1992) *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*, Reed Books, Chatswood, NSW.

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Meetings start at 8.00 pm at:

Geelong Botanic Gardens Friends Room.
Entrance is at the intersection of Holt Rd and Eastern Park Circuit in Eastern Park.
[Melway Map 452 G4]

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