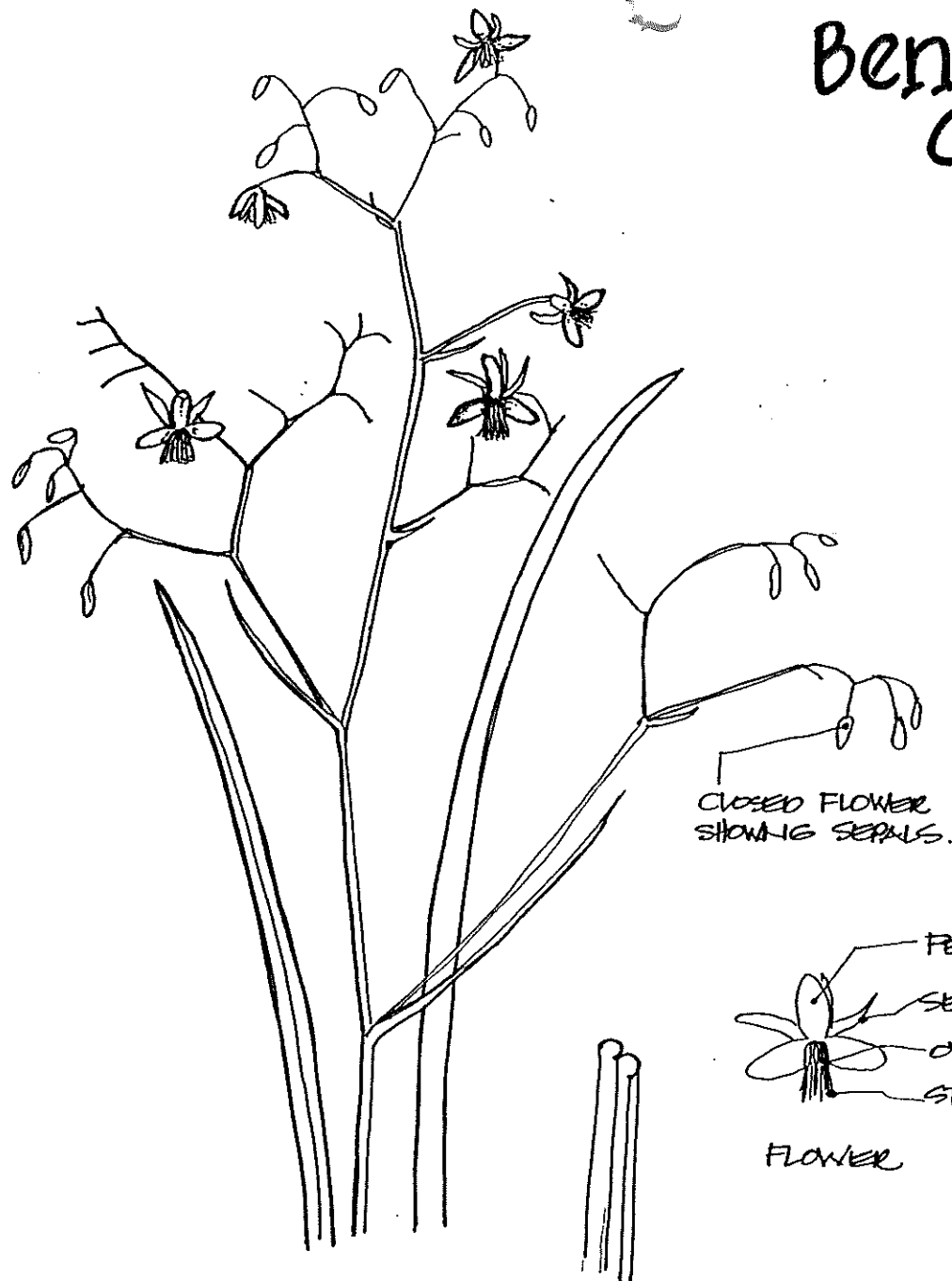


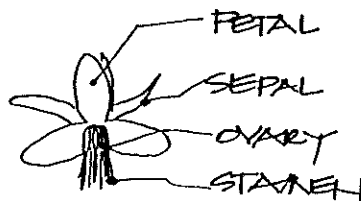
Bend of Islands Conservation Association Newsletter

December 1989

No 21.



CLOSED FLOWER
SHOWING SEPALS.



FLOWER

CROSS SECTION
OF LEAF
(EDGES ROLLED IN)

What Local Native's Flowering?

Botanical Name: *Dianella revoluta*

Common Name : Black-Anther Flax-Lily

Family : Liliaceae

A tussock-like plant of the lily family, forming a clump of smooth narrow dark green leaves 600-900 mm long with edges rolled in to a very narrow point.

An erect branched wiry flowering stalk rises above the leaves, usually up to 1 m tall. This stalk carries many small dark blue star-like flowers, consisting of three petals alternating with three slightly narrower sepals, attached below a three-lobed ovary, with six black and yellow stamens.

When flowering occurs in October, November and December, the overall effect is a spectacular patch of bright dark blue. After flowering, i.e. in January, February and March, globular bright blue, fruits appear.

This is an interesting and beautiful species to plant around outdoor living areas with such impressive features as the flax-like leaves and the bright blue flowers and fruits.

Cric Henry.

Oil Ain't Oil to an Echidna

I maintain and repair my Land Rover and Suzuki and over a year I can accumulate about 25 litres of used engine and transmission oils. Sometimes Pierre Noirjean, builder/carpenter extraordinaire, gives me bags of sawdust which I mix with old oil, resulting in a not too wet mixture which when shovelled into an open fireplace or slow combustion stove makes an excellent fire starter thus eliminating the need for small dry kindling.

In July this year I had four 20-litre drums with the tops cut out full of oily sawdust stored side by side in my mud-brick 'gingerbread house' which I use as a storeroom/workshop. One day I went into the G.B.H. and the place was in great disorder. Containers had been overturned, tools displaced and oily sawdust had been spilled out of the drums onto the floor. All four drums had lost about one-third of their contents but were still upright. Obviously an animal had entered through a broken window at ground level.

Looking around I was amazed to see an echidna in one of the drums with only its back exposed. I was dismayed that the poor creature had suffered such a horrible death. However, I was even more amazed when on touching the animal I saw that it was breathing regularly in spite of its head being buried in the mess.

I could barely believe what I was seeing! I wanted someone else to see this so I rushed to the phone and rang Tim Ealey but he was not at home. I then rang John McCallum but he could not come because he was on his way to teach at Eltham College. No other near neighbours were home and the echidna's plight seemed urgent. I donned leather gloves and tried to lift out the animal but it immediately set about burying itself deeper into the stuff, so I took the drum outside and emptied all the contents on the ground. One very oily echidna emerged from the mess and started departing. Again I tried to lift it and again it started digging but this time into its natural element -- the dry earth.

Realizing that soil would be about the best cleanser one could get for such a difficult to clean creature, I encouraged it in its efforts and helped by piling soil on until it was quite covered.

The next day I had to depart for skiing destinations at Dinner Plain and Perisher Valley and did not return until two weeks later whereupon I went straight to the burial place. The echidna was gone.

What was the explanation for all this? Well, one school teacher biologist with whom I discussed it in a lodge at Perisher suggested that the echidna can sense the spore of termite activity or sawdust rather than the termites themselves and this is why the animal investigated all four drums.

Has anyone any other explanation?

Norm Linton-Smith



There are times when the best intentions can lead to the worst mistakes. In Southern Australia for example growing native plants, normally considered ecologically desirable, is creating major ecological damage.

I've just finished reading a disturbing report on the vegetation of Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve south of Melbourne. According to the author, government botanist David Cheal, the

reserve has a severe weed problem, and 'The most troublesome weed species (those which are now grossly altering native plant communities or preventing their regeneration) are *Acacia longifolia* (Sallow Wattle), *Leptospermum laevigatum* (Coast Tea-tree), *Oxylobium lanceolatum* (Native Willow), *Pinus pinaster* (Cluster pine), *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pine) and *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)'.

Anyone who knows plants will realise that, apart from the two pines, these 'most troublesome weed species' are all Australian natives. They are ornamental trees native to other parts of Australia, that have been introduced by gardeners in nearby towns, and have spread into the bush, upsetting the natural balance. Disturbance to the reserve, and especially changes in burning, have given them an edge over the original heathland plants.

The native willow is from Western Australia. The other species grow naturally in Victoria, but not in the region of the reserve. There are another three exotic wattles running wild in the park: cedar wattle from the Blue Mountains, Gosford wattle from Gosford, and golden wreath wattle from Western Australia, but these are minor weeds.

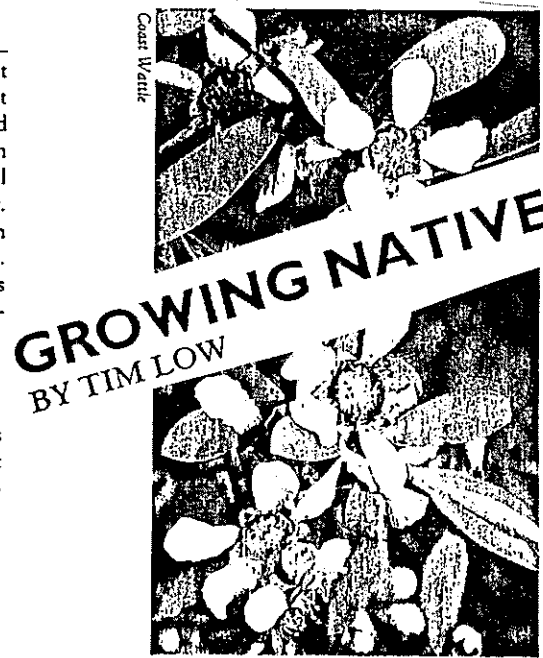
Original Heathland Overrun

The native weed problem at Langwarrin is so serious that David has advocated slashing and burning, and even spraying with 2 4 5-T. Otherwise, the original heathland plants may disappear. A very rare bird, the southern emu wren, is also threatened. It lives in special she-oak heaths which are vanishing under choking stands of sallow wattle.

In the Mount Lofty Ranges behind Adelaide the native forest is being sullied by an extraordinary range of exotic natives, including wattles, grevilleas, hakeas and sweet pittosporum from the eastern states and bluebell creeper, black coral pea and pincushion hakea from Western Australia. Around Melbourne the worst native weeds are cootamundra wattle from New South Wales and the eastern sweet pittosporum, which is engulfing eucalypt forests, aided by introduced blackbirds that spread the seeds. So dense is the foliage of sweet pittosporum that it shades out other plants.

Sydney and Brisbane are faring better than the southern cities, although Brisbane has a growing problem with the north Queensland umbrella tree, now a significant weed on Moreton and other offshore islands.

Exotic natives are becoming a problem in Australia because the country is so large and the definition of 'native' is so ambiguous. A gardener in Sydney may plant a Western Australian wattle and proudly proclaim it to be a native tree. Yet its native habitat is further from Sydney than Istanbul is from Amsterdam, and a Turkish plant grown in Holland would hardly be considered a 'native'.



TIM LOW QLD MUSEUM



GROWING NATIVE WEEDS

BY TIM LOW

So far, exotic natives are not behaving as atrociously as certain overseas shrubs such as lantana, blackberry, bitou bush, groundsel and gorse. But they are more likely to become a greater problem as more gardeners plant native species which are then spread about the country. Inevitably a share of these will become weeds.

Preserving Local Wilderness

Inner city gardeners need not worry about what they plant. But those living near bushland should carefully consider sowing only those Australian plants that actually grow in the nearby bush. This, surely, is what 'growing natives' should be about: preserving the integrity of the local wilderness.

Gardeners should be especially wary of plants which are proven pests. Among the wattles particularly, are many dubious species which have become weeds, not only in Australia, but in South Africa, Europe, and wherever they have taken root. The following in particular should be blacklisted: *Acacia baileyana*, *A. cyclops*, *A. dealbata*, *A. decurrens*, *A. elata*, *A. longifolia*, *A. mearnsii*, *A. podalyifolia*, *A. prominens*, *A. saligna*. Around Adelaide and Melbourne some of these wattles are even hybridising with each other, and with local species.

Sweet pittosporum and Bluebell creeper (*Sollya heterophylla*) should definitely be avoided. Coast tea-tree should

Sweet Pittosporum



TIM LOW QLD MUSEUM

never be planted west of its natural range in central Victoria (although no-one is sure anymore where its natural distribution ends). Hakeas, kangaroo apples (*Solanum*), native willow and cadaga (*Eucalyptus torrelliana*) are risky. On the other hand, the banksias, melaleucas, kunzeas, angophoras, kangaroo paws and others appear to be benign.

Increasing Public Awareness

The Society for Growing Australian Plants, and the nurseries which sell these plants, have done little to explain the risks. Many conservationists find the issue conceptually troubling; how can a native plant be an exotic pest, they complain. The most aware people are government botanists in Melbourne and Adelaide, concerned with preserving the integrity of national parks and forests in their states.

The issue needs a higher profile, and much more public awareness. It is ironic but true that most native gardeners would be sympathetic to the problem, if only they understood. ☒

Proposed BICA Excursion to East Gippsland

FRI 5, SAT 6, SUN 7 & MON 8 JANUARY, 1990

The idea is to explore those wonderful wildernesses - the Errimundra National Park and the Snowy River National Park - using the tiny township of Bendoc (about 90km north of Orbost and 10hrs from the N.S.W. border) as a base.

Accommodation in Bendoc will be available at the Commercial Hotel and the Hall. There is no camping ground. One double room and four twins will be available at the Hotel. This comprises the entire accommodation wing. The cost is \$18 per night for bed and breakfast. Dinner costs \$6 to \$7, and cut lunches can be provided for \$1.20 per sandwich. The bedrooms are clean and there are electric blankets and reading lights. Hot showers or baths are available.

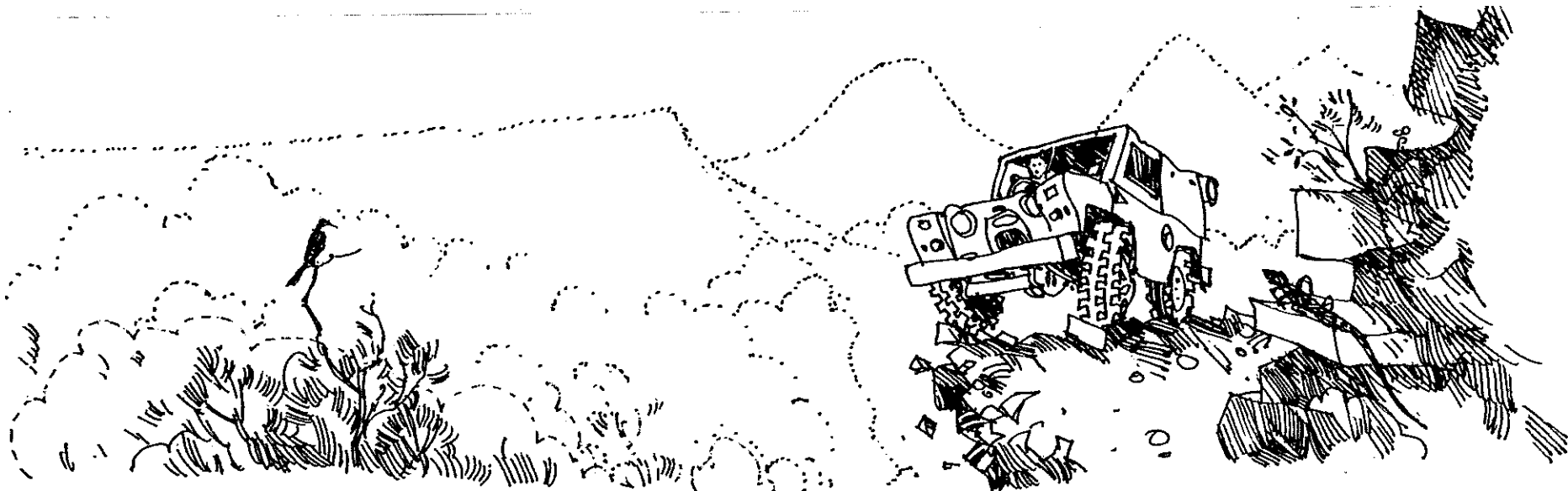
The Hall has a wood stove, toilets and water supply. There are no showers. Cost is \$1.00 per head per night. Persons using the Hall must provide their own bedding which is put down on the floor. Cooking may be done in the Hall. Alternatively the Hotel has undertaken to provide meals for users of the Hall, hence it is not necessary to take any food away in this trip. There are no shops or service stations in Bendoc. The Hotel can sleep 10 persons and the Hall 20+?

The Itinerary will include the Baldwin Spencer trail, the Errimundra Plateau and Mt. Ellery, Apwim in the Snowy River at Mackillop Bridge, a 10 mile walk from Monkey Tops to Waratah Flat, the Rodger River wilderness, the strange cabbage tree palms near Mario. I will provide CF & L pamphlets describing all the above.

Roads are narrow and unsealed. They can be impassable to 2WD even in summer - after rain. 4WD will be no problems at any time. Axes and bow saws should be carried by a few vehicles. One chain saw should be available; all these being needed to clear fallen trees across the roads. The C F & L clears tracks but trees can come down at any time. Dry tracks should be quite O.K. for 2WDs. I did most of what I am proposing in September this year. It was a wonderful experience and I would love to repeat it and share it with readers of this newsletter. Three nights will be spent in Bendoc. In order to secure the accommodation, and food supply, I would like to collect some money now. I would like \$20.00 per person from those intending to stay at the Hotel, and \$2.00 per person from those intending to stay at the Hall. My phone number is 712 0465, and I am most reliably contactable after 8p.m.

Norm Linton-Smith.

P.S. Food is brought by truck to Bendoc from Delegate, one per week.



Bird of the Month

POWERFUL OWL

NINOX STRENUA

This is a very large owl (600-660 mm) with dark yellow eyes. Its upper parts, and tail, are dark greyish brown with indistinct off-white bars and underparts are whitish with dark greyish brown chevrons (chevrons are V-shaped stripes, usually on the breast of a bird). Legs are feathered to the ankle and it has powerful dull yellow feet. The male is larger than the female. The juvenile has white underparts and crown with contrast of small dark streaks and dark eye patches.

The birds live permanently in pairs and by day can be found roosting singly, in pairs or in family groups of 3 or 4 in foliage or on branches of fairly open trees in forest or woodland. Easily approached by day, shy and difficult to observe by night. They have slow, deliberate flight on huge wings. They prey at night, mainly on ringtail possums, sugar gliders, small birds, etc. They sometimes hold a dead prey in their talons all day while roosting and eat it at evening before leaving the roost. Such an event was observed by the McCallums a couple of years ago.

Voice:

An impressive, slow, carrying 'whooh-hooo' on the same low pitch.

Habitat:

Dense mountain gullies, coastal forests and woodlands, coastal scrubs, pine plantations. Each pair has a range of about 10,000 hectares (2 1/2 times the area of the ELZ).

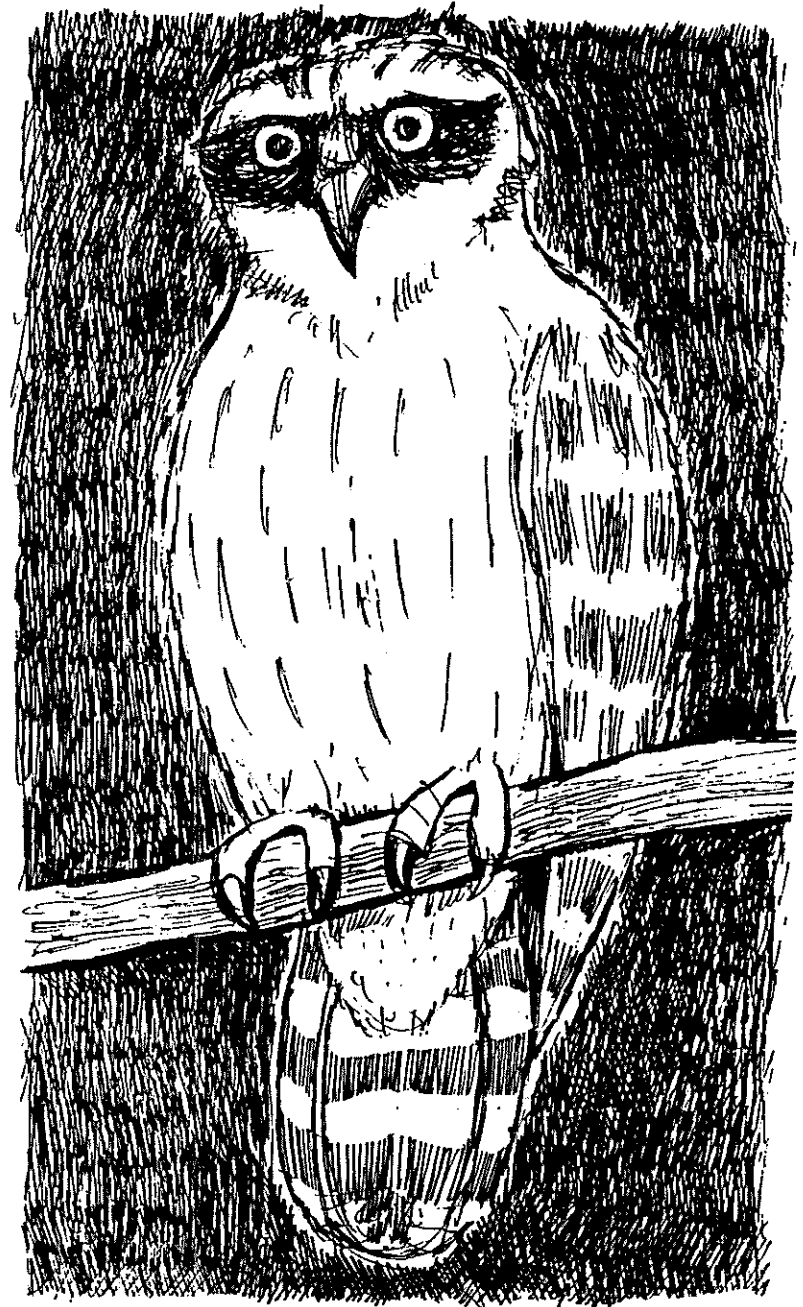
Breeding:

These owls nest on decayed debris prepared by the male in a large hollow limb or trunk 10-20 m or more high. Two eggs, which are dull white and oval, are laid from May to early June with eggs laid 4 nights apart. Incubation takes 35-38 days and young fledge in 8-9 weeks.

Powerful Owls are often heard in the ELZ and have been observed roosting from time to time. In late September this year I was delighted to observe a family group roosting not far from my house. The female and 2 immature young were in one tree and the male was in another tree some 20 metres away. The young were at the stage of moulting their white downy coats and developing their mature plumage.

It is wonderful to know that the ELZ is providing a habitat in which these magnificent birds can successfully breed.

Frank Pierce



Croak, Clack, Bonk & Chirp

I recently came across a few notes on the frogs in our dam. Years ago, I managed to catch four species and had them identified with their calls.

BROWN FROGLET: *Ranadella signifera*

C R A A A R K

SPOTTED MARCH FROG: *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*

C L A C K

BULL FROG OR POBBLE BONK: *Limnodynastes dorsalis*

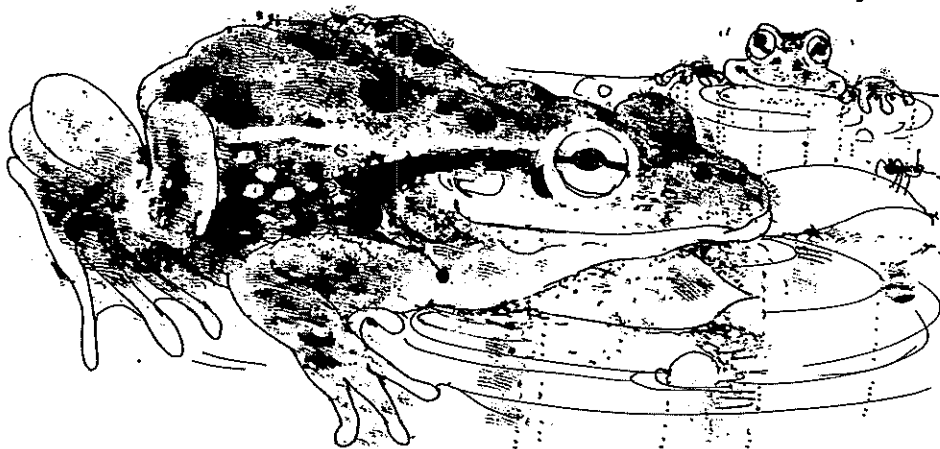
B O N K

BROWN TREE FROG: *Littoria euringi*

C H I R P

Only the males call - to attract the females. You can see their eyes with a torch - up to their necks in icy water trying to win a lady!!! I reckon the one that calls **BONK, BONK, POBBLE BONK** is really being honest about his intentions. The lady can't claim she was deceived if she suffers a fate worse than death.

Tim Easley



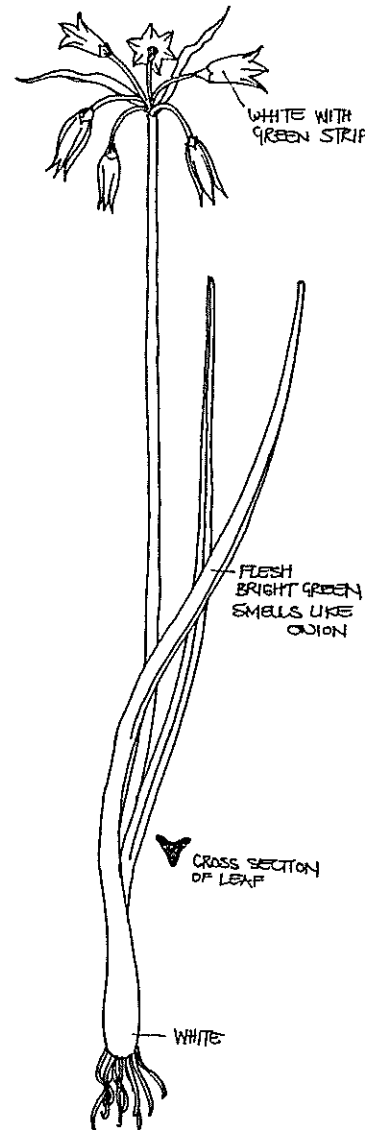
A Weed to Watch

Angled Onion

Flowering at present (September-October) is the Angled Onion (*Allium triquetrum*). This soft, very green leaved plant likes moist sites such as creek and river banks as well as drainage lines, particularly on moist (south-facing) slopes but can be seen along roadsides (e.g. along Henley Road). I have also seen it in with poorly tended pot plants! It reproduces by seeds and by division of bulbs and has covered a significant area of the bank of Watson's Creek near Oxley Bridge. Angled Onion is often found in piles of abandoned garden refuse, indication of its virtual indestructibility by physical means.

Small infestations could possibly be treated by very careful digging and removal and burning of the bulbs. This would have to be repeated each year until all bulbs were removed. Larger stands would have to be treated by applying a suitable herbicide to the foliage.

Although Angled Onion is (apart from the Oxley Bridge infestation, which we are attempting to have dealt with by the appropriate government authority) not yet a major pest in the Bend of Islands, it has the potential to occupy vast areas of suitable habitat, particularly close to the river. We should all be on the lookout for any plants and should give urgent priority to dealing with them.



John McCallum

Murnong - The Yam Daisy

MICROSERIS LANCEOLATUS

IDENTIFICATION: A small plant, easily overlooked when not flowering, could be confused with introduced weeds such as the dandelion. Features that distinguish the Yam Daisy are:

- (1) basal tuft of slender leaves (may be lanceolate = lance-shaped, or toothed)
- (2) flowering stalk has a drooping bud until the flower opens, and there is only one yellow daisy flower per stalk
- (3) seeds are retained on the flowering stalk for some time
- (4) plants are dormant over summer dying back to the taproot. Leaves emerge again in the late autumn/early winter.

DISTRIBUTION: Widespread in southern Australia. Also found in New Zealand. Very palatable to grazing animals, so less common than it was in Kangaroo Ground, plants are sometimes locally abundant, especially in protected areas, e.g. the steeper slopes of the Yarra bank.

CULTIVATION: Murnong germinates easily from seed (which remains fertile for over 12 months from collection).

They grow larger and faster in sandy loam or open potting mix than in heavy clay. Plants appreciate water (except during their dormancy - natural rainfall only) and slow release fertilizer. They must be grown quickly or they will be bitter.

USES: In addition to its obvious horticultural appeal, their only use is as food source:

- (1) Roots: Edible raw, but as the major carbohydrate present is inulin (which is responsible

for the flavour of Jerusalem artichokes and is more or less indigestible) the full nutritional benefit is not obtained. When cooked, the inulin breaks down into starches and sugars that are more easily digested. They can be steamed, boiled or baked.

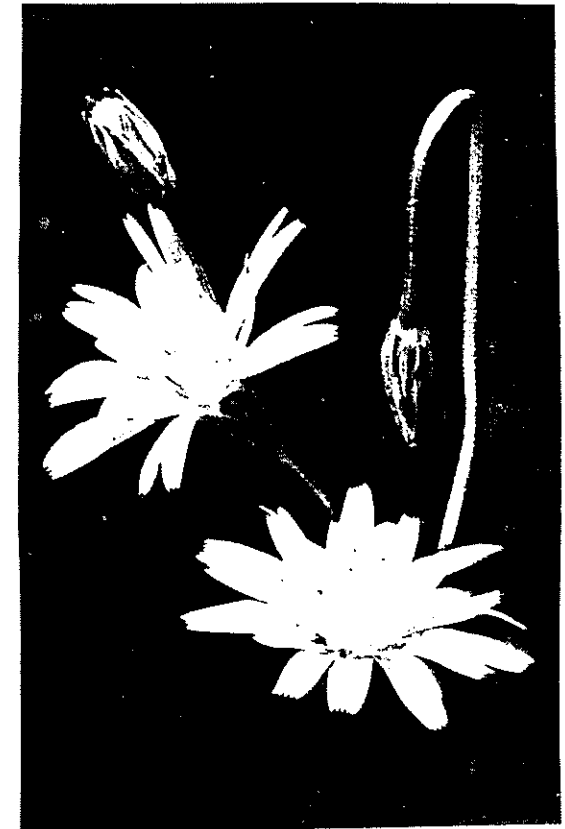
- (2) Leaves: Edible raw or cooked. It belongs to the same part of the daisy family as endive and chicory, so tends to be a bit stringy and strongly flavoured raw.

N.B. - Don't eat the newly emergent leaves in early winter as the plant won't have energy reserves to replace them.

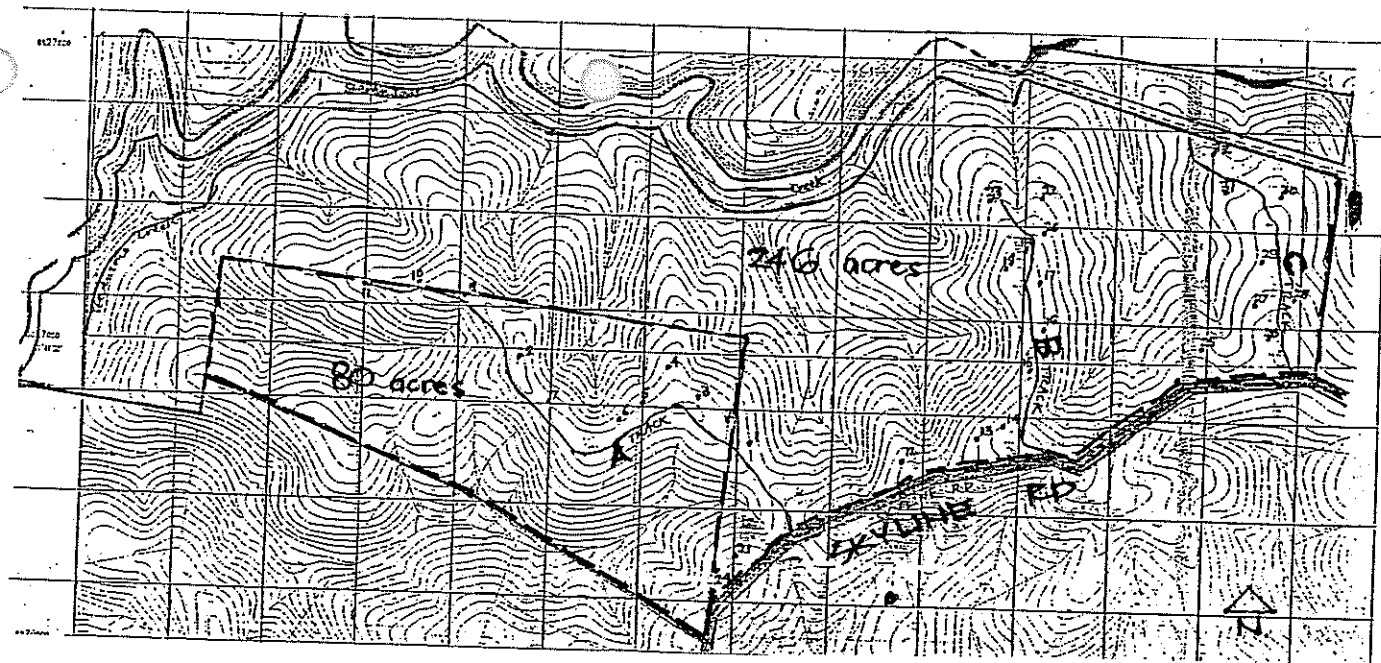
HISTORICAL: Murnong roots were popular staple foods for many Aboriginal tribes in southern Australia. The word "Murnong" is one of the Aboriginal names for the plant. It was popular for its flavour, its abundance and because it was shallow-rooted, so women and children could easily obtain large amounts. The use of digging sticks opened up the soil, facilitating the growth of more Yam Daisies. Also, the Aboriginal practice of "firestick farming" would have helped reduce competition and provided a more suitable environment for the plants. Roots of related species of *Microseris* were eaten by North American Indians. **CONSERVATION:** When Europeans arrived, Murnong was exceedingly common in its range. Once sheep and cattle were introduced and Aboriginal traditional lifestyles disrupted, numbers of the plants were considerably reduced. It is no longer common, though probably not in danger of imminent extinction. If you want to experiment with eating Yam Daisies, collect one or two seeds from a few plants and grow them in your veggie patch. Plants should not be removed from the wild; they are already under enough pressure with predation by native animals, rabbits, in-

roduced snails and competition from weeds. We must try to act responsibly to maintain our natural ecosystem. It would be quite a turn-up if escapees from our vegetable gardens actually help the environment.

Rod Barker



My Potted History of the Co-op



PART ONE

We had been searching for a piece of Australia to live in for around 3 years when we came across Randell Champion and information about a Co-operative in Christmas Hills with 12 members on 80 acres of land. This all occurred in May 1971 and the Co-op was then full with no prospects of a vacancy and we were 5 couples unable to find land that suited our purpose.

Our search continued until we received news of the Co-op expanding into the neighbouring 246 acres with a total membership of 32 shares required. We decided to apply en masse requesting that our applications be considered together because of our previous intention to buy land and share it.

At a General Meeting in November 1971 we were accepted as members (we learned later that our applications were viewed with suspicion by the current members because of the way we presented ourselves as a group application...how right they were) and we had finally found more than we expected.

The fun was about to begin as the Co-op had no permits to operate under the Planning Scheme of the MMBW which was then the responsible authority and the Shire was very suspicious of what they thought was a colony of hippies in the bush.

I became involved as the Treasurer/Secretary assisting in the formation of the applications for a planning permit with the MMBW and the Shire

who were playing ducks and drakes about who was the first body to issue a permit of any kind to register our existence. The amount of paperwork and forward planning we were required to produce at that time to convince the powers that be that we were a viable organisation with serious aims was ludicrous and we spent many nights over many months compiling our case.

Obviously we were successful but it took 3 years before all the criteria for a permit from both bodies were satisfied. Years later we were asked to re-apply for a permit by the Shire as they had no record of our original permit. Needless to say we were not amused but after we went to the trouble of creating a new application one of our members gained access to their files with their staff in tow and found the original permit. Bureaucrats can be a load of laughs sometimes.

Once our permits were approved, the real work began with the true aims of the Co-op (to preserve the bush in as natural a state as possible whilst living in the bush) becoming our major task. As you can imagine, to get 32 or more people to agree on any issue is a major feat and many hours were spent fine tuning the aims into a workable model. There were casualties along the way as debate became passionate and some people found co-operative living was not to their taste, but the majority of the members have participated to create a long term, viable Residential Sanctuary.

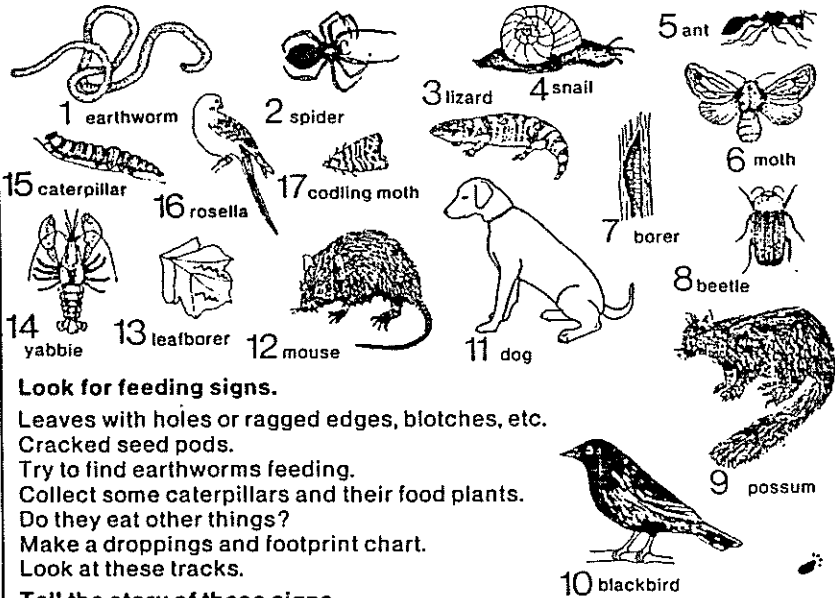
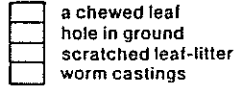
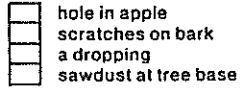
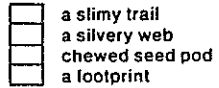
Neil Harvey

KIDS.

Signs of life

All creatures leave behind them a 'life-sign'!

Who make these?



Look for feeding signs.

Leaves with holes or ragged edges, blotches, etc.
Cracked seed pods.

Try to find earthworms feeding.

Collect some caterpillars and their food plants.

Do they eat other things?

Make a droppings and footprint chart.

Look at these tracks.

Tell the story of these signs.

Look for Case moth cases.

You might find some mantid egg cases.

If you see starlings' eggs on the lawn - why are they there?

Find some animal tracks.

Make a plaster cast of the tracks - add them to your collection.

What made these?

Take a print of your pet's foot.

How does the pattern change when it walks, runs.

WORDS: tracks, signs, droppings.

Odd One Out

In each of the following groups, one word does not belong.

UNDERLINE and give a reason for your choice.

1. Pelican - Dragonfly - Brown Spotted Spider - Water Boatman

2. Mosquito - Swamp Harrier - Cormorant - Heron

3. Murray Cod - Trout - Blackfish - Carp

4. Rabbit - Water Rat - Cow - Sheep

5. Red Gum - Cactus - Reeds - Teatree

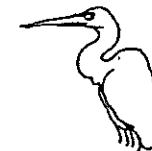
Wrong feet or wrong body

Some of these birds have the wrong feet.

Cut out the birds - give them the right feet and legs.



Dotterel

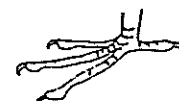


Heron



Harrier

Duck



Wading feet



Talons



Small thin feet

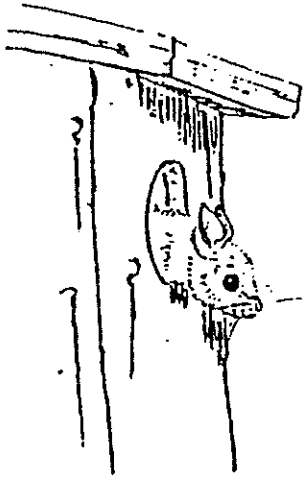


Webbed

Why are their feet different?

ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION

INFORMATION FROM 'THE YARRA BOOK' BY THE MMBW



Nest boxes for wildlife

Nearly one quarter of our native animals need tree hollows for nesting and shelter. Around Melbourne, that's a tall order because many suitable trees have been cleared to make way for homes — for people.

Because of this severe shortage of wildlife housing, the staff at Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park have built artificial nest boxes and placed them high in trees away from cats, dogs and vandals. The results have been very rewarding. Sugar gliders, bats, ringtail and brushtail possums, owlet nightjars, maned ducks and rosellas are just a few of the animals which have bred successfully in their new homes.

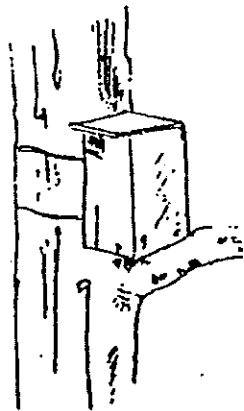
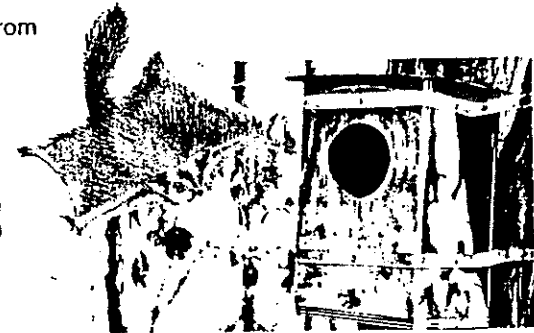
Home help for wildlife

Extend your family — build a nest box! Cheap and easy, nest boxes can add a new dimension to family life. You will be able to watch your new tenants as they inspect the box, bring in nesting materials and raise young. Keep a diary of their behavior and life cycle.

There are a few ground rules which you must observe if your extended family is going to be successful.

- Place the box high in a tree away from cats, dogs and people who might disturb its residents.
- Make sure it is protected from draughts, direct sun and that rain can't get in. Locate the box on the south-facing side.
- Do not disturb native animals once they are using the box. Enjoy them from a distance. Interference will frighten many species away. Some breeding animals will even abandon their young.

- Remember that the residents are **WILD**life. Don't expect them to become pets.
- Beware of unwanted tenants such as **sparrows** and **Indian mynahs**. These aggressive introduced birds can, if unchecked, take over the hollows from other native animals.
- Be patient. Many of our shy native animals take a while to find new homes and feel secure.



Architect designed nest boxes

Birds and mammals are not at all fussy about rough carpentry, but it is extremely important to get sizes, shapes and locations correct.

If you intend to build a nest box first try to find out what native animals occur in your area and then decide which ones you'd like to attract. After you have selected an animal, then build a box designed to cater for its needs.

The Bird Observers Club has produced an excellent leaflet "Nesting boxes for Australian birds" to help people who wish to share their gardens with hollow-nesting birds. Why don't you obtain a copy?

GENERAL NESTING BOX REQUIREMENTS

A hinged lid permits inspection and cleaning out after use. The lid should be secured using a simple clip or party driven in nail.

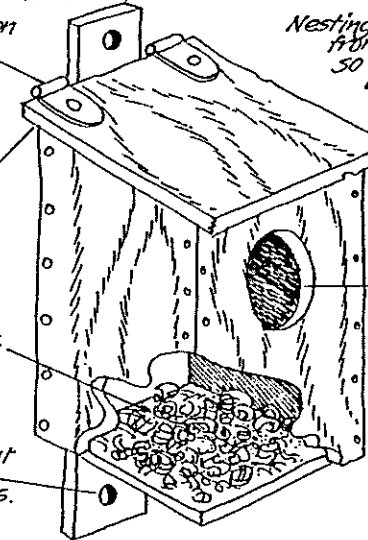
For weather protection, the lid must slope from the back and overhang the front by about 25 mm. It should also overhang the sides. DO NOT use sheet metal on the lid.

20 mm deep layer of wood shaving should cover the floor.

Fix a mounting strip to the back of the box to make attachment to a tree trunk easier. Pre-drill nail holes to prevent splitting and use 100 mm galvanized flat-head nails.

Box must be stable and upright.

Place box at least 3m above ground.

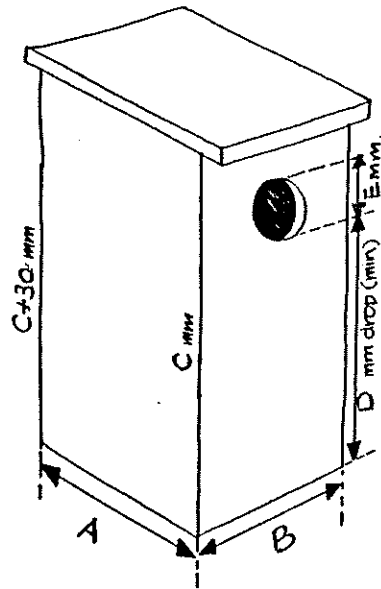


Nesting boxes are best made from rough sawn timber so animals can get a grip and should be about 19-25 mm thick to provide insulation. DO NOT use treated timber, toxic paints, chipboard, smelly glues or leave any sharp objects such as protruding nails or screws.

Entrance hole should be no bigger than is necessary for the animal the box is intended to house.

Inside walls must have toe holds so the young can climb out. Roughen up with coarse sandpaper or notch with a circular saw before assembly.

NEST BOX SIZES



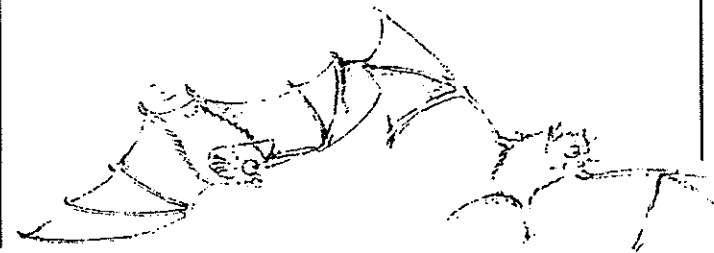
TENANT	A	B	C	D	E	NOTES
EASTERN ROSILLA	200	200	300	280	70-90	No PERCHES
BROSH-TAIL ROSSOM	250	300	520	400	80-100	
PINKTAIL ROSSOM	200	250	400	300	60-80	
SUGAR GLIDER	200	150	400	350	40-50	LOCATE TO SUIT GLIDING TO AND FROM ADJACENT BUSH!

Batty homes

Most of the bats which 'hang around' Melbourne live in tree hollows and crevices. However it is possible to build special homes for bats to live in. Why don't you try? Bats are excellent tenants. In return for housing one bat may eat as many as 600 mosquitoes in a single hour. Plus, they put on an aerobatics show every evening!

If you would like to build a bat home:

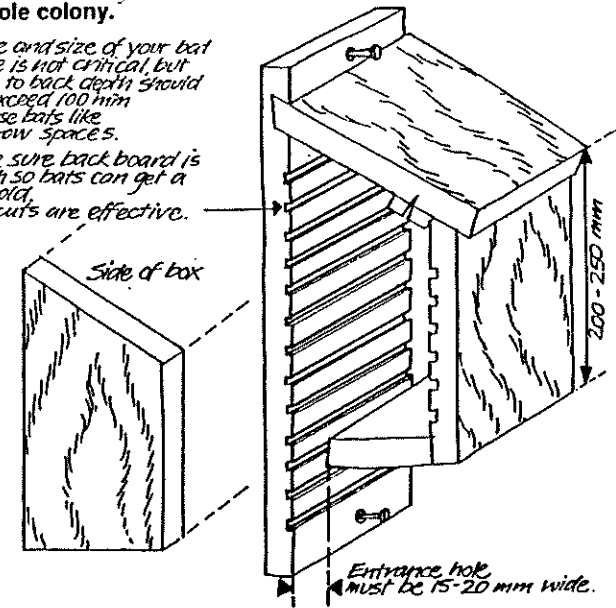
- Make sure cats can't get near it.
- Locate it about 3 to 4 metres above the ground (at least)!
- If you put it close to your house, keep it away from lights and noisy spots.
- Don't disturb the bats.
- Be patient. Bats take a while to find new homes.



Latest architect designed bat home ... can host a whole colony.

Shape and size of your bat home is not critical, but front to back depth should not exceed 100 mm because bats like narrow spaces.

Make sure back board is rough so bats can get a foothold. Saw cuts are effective.



Conservation Covenants

At our General Meeting in May, Warrick Forge of the Victorian Conservation Trust outlined the use of Conservation Covenants. Several members at the meeting showed interest in placing covenants on their properties.

We now present the facts on covenants and a draft of a sample covenant to see how many people would be interested in placing a covenant on their land.

WHAT IS THE AIM OF A CONSERVATION COVENANT? THE AIM IS TO KEEP HABITATS FREE FOREVER FROM DISTURBANCE OR DESTRUCTION. COVENANTS CAN BE DESIGNED TO PROTECT BUSHLAND AND ITS ASSOCIATED WILDLIFE.

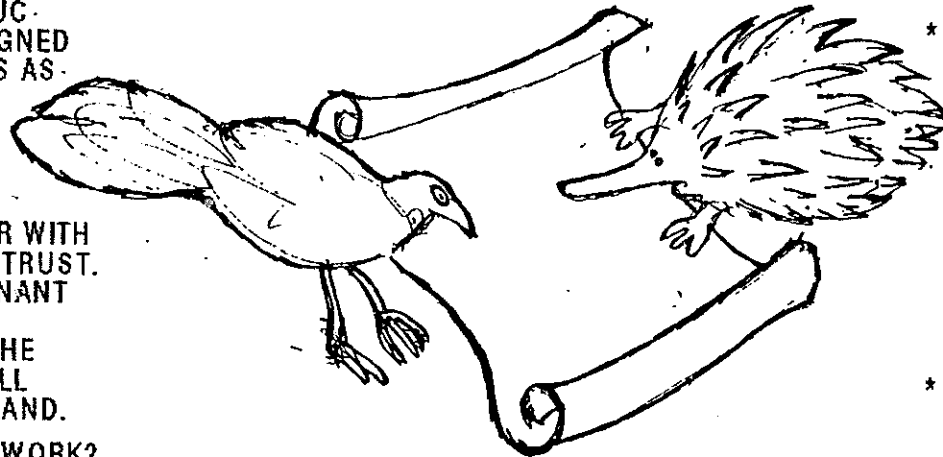
WHAT IS A CONSERVATION COVENANT? A CONSERVATION COVENANT IS AN AGREEMENT ENTERED INTO BY A LANDOWNER WITH THE VICTORIAN CONSERVATION TRUST. ONCE THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT HAVE BEEN AGREED UPON, THE COVENANT IS REGISTERED ON THE TITLE OF THE PROPERTY AND WILL BIND FUTURE OWNERS OF THE LAND.

HOW DOES THE COVENANT WORK?

- * The agreement is entirely voluntary and is drawn up in order to achieve the conservation objectives of the landowner.
- * Owners of land of special interest may covenant with the Trust with respect to the development or use of land and to protect bushland, trees, rock formations, wetlands, buildings or other features.
- * The Trust can assist with expert advice and planning in order to achieve those objectives for the particular areas.
- * The landowner can be assured that the conservation controls will be permanent. It is not like a Council's planning scheme which can be amended at any time and depends upon control and enforcement by a Council which at times may have little interest in the land or in conservation.
- * More importantly, land which is covenanted is likely to attract a potential

owner interested in nature conservation.

- * Covenants also provide a means by which a group of owners can band together to seek conservation of a particular habitat or feature which may extend across individual property boundaries.
- * Experience overseas has shown that a conservation covenant may increase the value of land in many cases because of the added status and better land uses which may be encouraged. Where an owner requires financial assistance, an application may be lodged with the Trust and genuine cases are considered.



- * Once land is covenanted, rating authorities are required to take this into account and rates and taxes would normally be reduced if the land would otherwise be capable of development.

Complete or partial exemption from rates and taxes may be obtained in cases where 'preservation of the land in its natural state is not economically feasible'.

- * Once the covenant is executed, the Trust is pledged to ensure in the future that its spirit and intent are observed. The

power to covenant is derived from the Victorian Conservation Trust Act. Covenants are fully enforceable, flexible, and by agreement may contain positive obligations unlike restrictive covenants which developed under common law.

WHY HAVE A COVENANT IF YOU OWN LAND IN THE E.L.Z.?

The protection and enhancement of the natural environment in the ELZ has the provisions of the Shire of Healesville's Planning Scheme as a legal basis. BICA has worked to ensure that these provisions effectively define and achieve the aims of the ELZ. However this protection of the ELZ is very much dependant on the attitude of the councillors at any time. If, at some time in the future, the Council became unsympathetic or opposed to environmental conservation, then they could (1) amend the Planning Scheme to water down or even delete the ELZ provisions or (2) not bother to effectively enforce the provisions. The Council's resolve on these matters depends to a large extent on the resolve or

spirit of the residents of the ELZ. While this spirit is currently strong, as reflected by the large majority of ELZ residents and landowners who are members of BICA, the future is beyond anyone's control. The maintenance of a majority support for the ELZ cannot be guaranteed. Many residents have put a great deal of effort into enhancing the natural environment on their properties, and with this effort have developed a strong bond with their land. Conservation Covenants can provide a second layer of legal protection to the environment on any particular property to ensure years of weed eradication are not wasted because of future political bias. On the broader picture, the legal basis for the ELZ can be supplemented and strengthened by a significant number of property owners placing covenants on the properties.

DRAFT OF A TYPICAL COVENANT

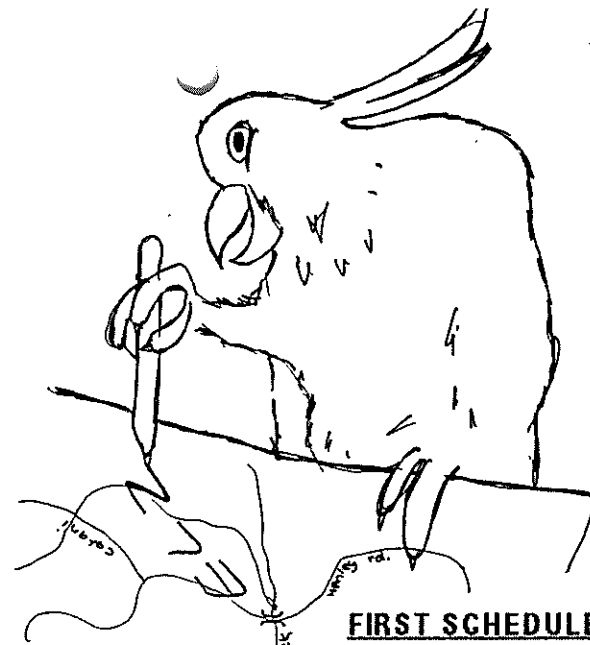
The following is a draft covenant which could be applicable to most ELZ properties. The covenant virtually repeats the provisions of the current planning scheme. Anyone can add, change, or delete clauses which they would prefer to apply to their own property to cover any special feature.

INSTRUMENT CREATING A COVENANT PURSUANT TO SECTION 3A OF THE VICTORIAN CONSERVATION TRUST ACT 1972

WHEREAS

- A. (hereinafter called "the Owner") is/are registered as proprietor/s of an estate in fee simple in ALL THAT piece of land described in the Schedule of Land ("the Land").
- B. The Victorian Conservation Trust ("the Trust") was established by the Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972 ("the Act") and pursuant to Section 3A of the Act the owner of any land may, subject to obtaining the approval of the Minister for Planning and Environment, enter into a covenant with the Trust with respect to such land.
- C. The Owner has agreed with the Trust to enter into a covenant with the Trust with respect to "the Land" for the purposes specified in the First Schedule.

NOW THEREFORE in consideration of the said agreement THIS INSTRUMENT WITNESSES that the Owner and the Trust mutually covenant at all times to observe and perform the respective agreements, restrictions, duties and obligations contained in the Second Schedule to the intent that the same shall bind "the Land" in perpetuity PROVIDED HOWEVER that this Instrument shall not be binding on the Owner and shall not be deemed to have been entered into in accordance with Section 3A(1) of the Act until it has been approved by the Minister for Planning and Environment pursuant to Section 3A(8) of the Act.



FIRST SCHEDULE

AIMS AND PURPOSES OF THE COVENANT

The purpose of this covenant is to achieve the following objectives of the Owner and the Trust in respect of "the Land":

To conserve its:

- (i) native plants and wildlife
- (ii) natural interest and beauty
- (iii) ecological significance
- (iv) historical interest
- (v) bushland, trees and rock formations
- (vi) watercourses, lakes, ponds, marshes and other bodies of water.

SECOND SCHEDULE

- 1. No act or thing shall be done by the Owner upon "the Land" at any time hereafter which in the opinion of the Trust is prejudicial to the conservation of "the Land".
- 2. In particular, on and with respect to "the Land", except with the prior written consent of the Trust, the Owner shall not:
 - 2.1. destroy, damage or remove any native trees, plants or grasses nor plant any trees, grasses or plants other than local indigenous native flora;
 - 2.2. permit any act or omission which may adversely affect any Indigenous flora or fauna or related habitats;
 - 2.3. permit any deterioration in the natural state or in the flow, supply, quantity or quality of any body of water;

- 2.4. permit livestock to enter and where 'the Land' is adjacent to an area being grazed the Owner shall keep fences and gates between such area and 'the Land' in good stockproof order and condition;
- 2.5. allow the introduction of any non-Indigenous fauna or any cat, dog or other domestic animals;
- 2.6. permit to be erected or displayed any notice, hoarding or advertising matter save for identification signs;
- 2.7. carry out any form of mining, extraction or exploration for any materials, petroleum or other substances and shall notify the Trust of any advice received from any body or person of intention to erect utility transmission lines or to carry out mining extraction and shall not consent to any such proposal without the written permission of the Trust;
- 2.8. permit any buildings except for one private dwelling together with the usual outbuildings and any further buildings approved by the Trust which are necessary for the management of 'the Land' and/or consistent with the objectives of this deed. Such buildings are to be sensitively designed to harmonise with the natural environment and finished with subdued colour tonings;
- 2.10. permit the removal of timber.
3. The Trust will not unreasonably withhold its consent to any proposal submitted by the Owner if it is satisfied that the proposal will not prejudice the specified purposes of this covenant.
4. None of the prohibitions and restrictions specified in this covenant shall apply to the extent necessary for:
 - (i) reasonable fire protection, weed and pest control;
 - (ii) maintenance of fences, culverts, dams, bridges, watercourses, buildings, tracks, paths and roads;
 - (iii) the proper management of 'the Land' as a protected environment for indigenous flora and fauna.
5. The Owner shall make reasonable efforts to prevent the invasion of pests and weeds.
6. The Trust through its trustees, officers, agents or servants upon giving reasonable notice to the Owner may enter 'the Land' in order to assess its condition.
7. The Owner may permit members of the general public access to 'the

Land' on terms and conditions from time to time agreed with the Trust.

8. The Owner shall notify the Trust of any change of ownership or control of any portion of 'the Land' and shall notify the Trust of the name and address of the new owner or lessee.
9. Nothing in this instrument shall render the Owner personally liable for any breach of its terms committed after the Owner ceases to be the registered proprietor of the 'the Land'.

SCHEDULE OF LAND

(insert original here)

FURTHER ACTION: Anyone interested in following up this issue for their property is asked to contact Frank Pierce (712 0361) and a meeting will be arranged to further discuss the concept.

Frank Pierce & Janet Mattiske

P.S. BICA is also investigating the inclusion of the ELZ for the National Estate and registration by the National Trust. These things will further strengthen the 'legal' basis of the ELZ should its existence be threatened in more adverse future times, e.g. land acquisition for a Lilydale-Greensborough Freeway.

Tod Soderquist, a Ph.D. student at Monash University, asks any residents who know of tuans (bush-tailed phascogales) on their property to contact him at (059) 62 3157 or 42 Symons St, Healesville, 3777.

He is currently studying the ecology of tuans with the intent of developing conservation strategies. Tuans will be captured only in wooden traps or from nest boxes to ensure their safety.

Friends of the Fire Brigade

The Friends of the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade would like to hear from individuals willing to assist in 1990 fund raising activities. The present goal is for more listening sets.

Following the success of previous theatre nights, we plan to book the following productions at the Eltham Little Theatre.

March Death Rattle, or the Last Days of Epic. J Remorse

May The Innocents

June The Pathfinder

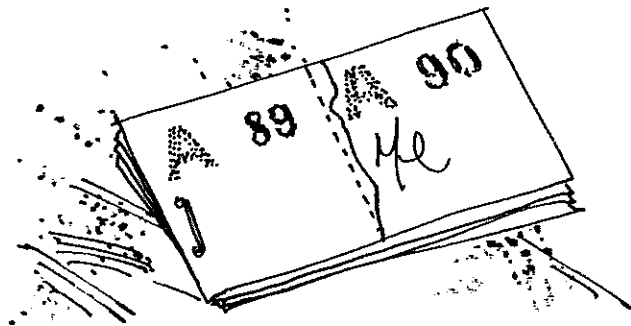
September East Lynne

November Seasons Greetings

Early in the new year, we would welcome help in organising a day for our local teenagers, starting with a Brigade Training Session and followed by a barbeque with entertainment.

At the present tickets for the Monster Christmas Hamper are circulating at \$1. That raffle will be drawn at Tim and Laura's Summer Solstice party on Saturday December 16th.

In the pipeline is a proposal for a Garage Sale some time around next Easter. For further details contact: JANELLE - 712 0426, MARGARET - 712 0563, SHEILA - 712 0542, or CAROL ANN - 712 0451.



Weeds Mean Work!



WEEDS MEANS WORK!

The wet spring and mild weather has presented us with a very healthy growth of weeds in some areas. Broadly speaking, the problems fall into three categories.

* Private Property.

BICA has information available to help you to identify causes of weed infestation, identify weed species and decide on control measures. Act before the problem becomes too large for you to deal with.

* Government Land (not including roadsides).

BICA is making approaches to appropriate ministries to have them deal with problems on their land.

*Roadsides - our community problem.

A recent survey of roadside weed infestation indicates that in some places and with respect to some species, the problem is out of control. So that we can control the weeds in other areas, more working bees will be needed. Whilst our work parties are usually fairly well attended, it seems to be the same familiar faces every time. If we are to continue to meet our roadside clearing commitments and deal with roadside weeds, we will need some fresh blood, sometimes at quite short notice.

Please contact John McCallum 712 0319

Terry O'Brien 712 0352

or any other committee member if you are willing to help in this regard.

