

# Bend of Islands Conservation Association Newsletter

Dec 1990. No. 23

## WHAT NATIVE'S FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *Lomandra longifolia*

Common name: Spiny-headed mat-rush

The Mat-rush along with the Grass-trees belong to the Xanthorrhoeaceae Family which is very closely related to the Liliaceae Family.

The flowering period of the Spiny-headed Mat-rush is from October to January. It is a widespread species though more common along the river. Apparently the Yarra aborigines knew the plant as karawun and used the flexible leaves for basketwork.

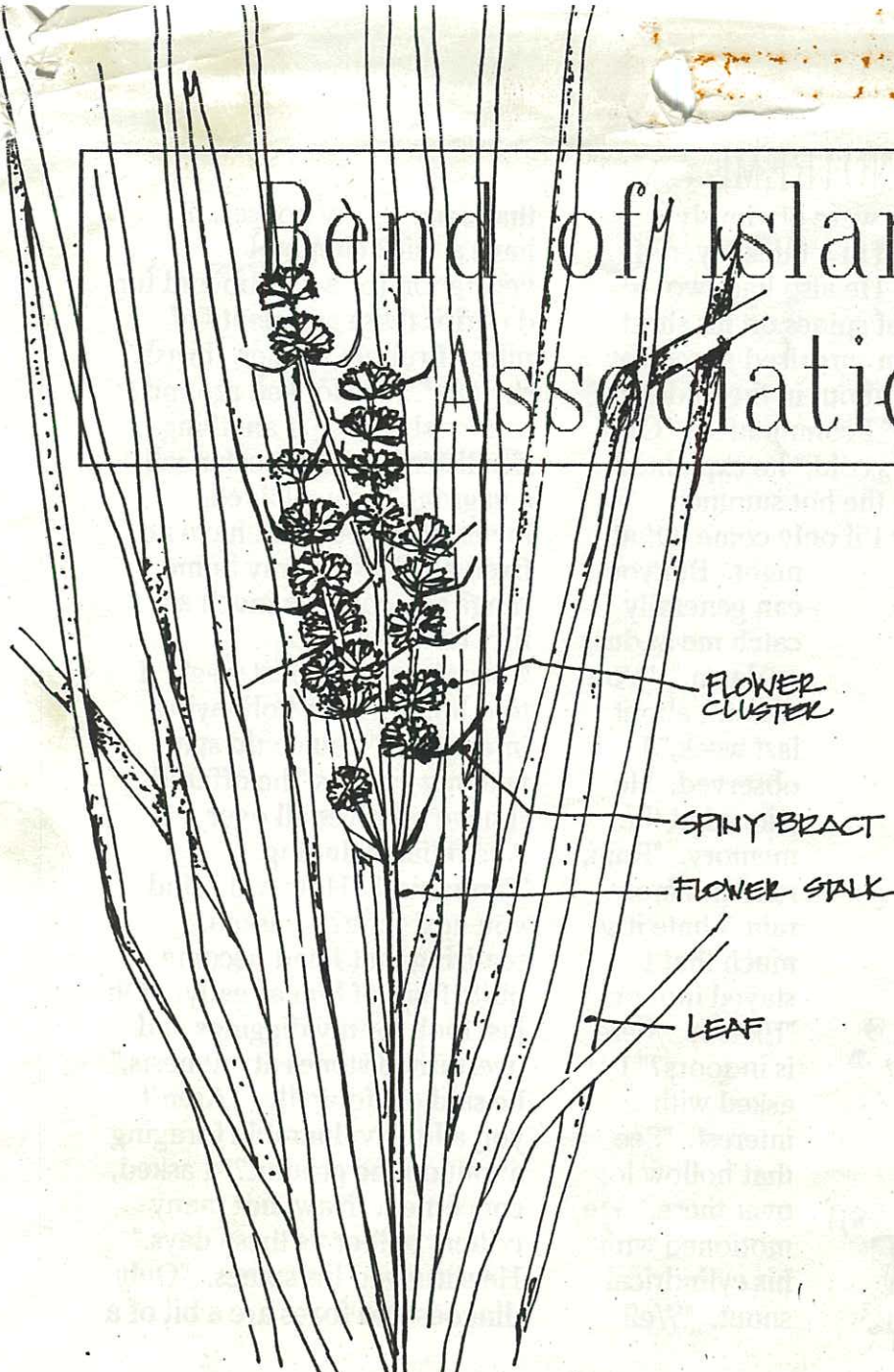
It is a large tussocky plant with long firm grass-like leaves 1 metre long and 3-10 mm wide. The flower stalks are narrower, stiffer and shorter than the leaves and have erect flowering branches radiating in whorls up the stalk. Along these branches are masses of tiny mustard yellow coloured flowers arranged in dense clusters up the stem. At the base of each cluster is a long spiny bract (see illustration).

This plant is well worth planting around your house with such striking features as its tussocky form and the long dense flowering spikes.

It is a hardy species, tolerant of heavy clay soils, wet winters and dry summers and is a good source of food for small birds and butterflies.

Cric Henry

— LOMANDRA LONGIFOLIA  
(SPINY MATRUSH).



# THE MEANDERING MONOTREME

"Hey, Cowboy!" I said, looking down at him. "Why 'Cowboy'?" he asked. "Well you've got 'spurs' haven't you!" I joked. "I'm actually a *Tachyglossus aculeatus*," he replied proudly. "Short-beaked Echidna to you. And as for the spurs on my back legs," he confided in a whisper,

"they're just for show these days. About as useful as your appendix, but they help you to distinguish us fellas from the girls. Anyway," he said, getting into the spirit of my joke, "I've got more 'spine' than you!" I took a close look at him. He had brown-black coarse fur between yellowish spines each

of which were obviously anchored in a thick layer of muscle. He also had two whorls of spines on his short tail. "I'm surprised to see you out and about in the middle of the day," I commented. "Only while it's cold," he explained. "During the hot summer weather I'll only come out at

night. But you can generally catch me at dusk or dawn." "You weren't about last week," I observed. He winced at the memory. "Rain, rain and more rain. I hate it so much that I stayed indoors." "Exactly where is indoors?" I asked with interest. "See that hollow log over there." He motioned with his cylindrical snout. "Well

that's one of my houses. I have a thick clump of vegetation for a gazebo and for daytrips there are plenty of piles of rubble and, er, 'brush shelters'." He looked around cautiously to see if anything was listening. "I'm technically a vagrant," he explained, lowering his voice. "I have no fixed address and my home range can cover as much as fifty hectares." "I won't see you next week," I told him. "I'll be holidaying interstate." "You could stay with my cousins," he offered. "I have relatives all over Australia, including Tasmania." "How will I find you next time?" I asked, realizing that I had become quite fond of him already. "Oh just look for my diggings and overturned stones at ant nests," he said off-footedly. "Aren't you a little vulnerable foraging about on the ground?" I asked, concerned. "Naw, not many critters bother us these days." He shrugged his spines. "Only dingoes and foxes are a bit of a





## MEANDERING MONOTREME cont.

worry. But I have a clever self-defense manoeuvre. When there's danger I simply curl up and wedge myself into a corner or crevice, or if the soil is soft enough I dig swiftly and sink rapidly!" "You must have a ball!" I quipped. He poked all eighteen centimetres of his tongue out in reply to my remark. While he was at it he grabbed a couple of ants with it. They stuck to the sticky saliva on it and he ground them on horny spines between the back of his tongue and palate. (Echidnas don't have teeth.) I noticed that he had also ingested a lot of soil with his ants. "That explains why his cylindrical droppings with the abruptly broken ends contain dirt," I thought to myself. "Where do you go for a gourmet meal?" I asked. "Early in Spring there's a nice little self-service or two with succulent fat-laden female meat ants," he replied. "For the rest of the year any corner

cafe that serves termite or ant will do."  
"Do you always travel alone?" I enquired. He looked at me with his small protruding eyes. "Well I'm usually a recluse, but from June to August there's a waft of Tachyglossus Number Five in the air, so you might see several of us in hot pursuit of female company." At the thought he preened himself with a particular claw designed for the purpose on his hind feet. "What about kids?" I asked. "Well in a nutshell, or should I say 'eggshell'," he explained, "about two weeks after the hanky-panky a single soft-shelled egg is laid by the lady echidna. She places it into a pouch on her belly. The egg hatches after about ten days and for about six weeks or more junior suckles milk secreted from mother's skin in the pouch. After that the relationship becomes a bit prickly, so junior is asked to leave the pouch and is placed in a safe spot." "When can I meet your youngster?" I asked eagerly. "You may see him wandering about as early as

February, March or April when still suckling," he said. "But if not then, maybe the following September to November when he leaves home and celebrates his first birthday." "By the way, how did you know I was here?" I asked, remembering that I'd been creeping about the bushland fairly quietly. "Despite my small ears I have very good hearing," he said. "Why didn't you take cover before you could be seen, like echidnas usually do?" I wanted to know. "Dammit, I was fooled by the electric current in that torch you're carrying," he admitted a little sheepishly. "That Dr Uhe Proske at Monash University has a lot to answer for, coming out here and advising you all to test the ability of our snouts at detection of minute voltages," he muttered. "I thought only your other monotreme relative the



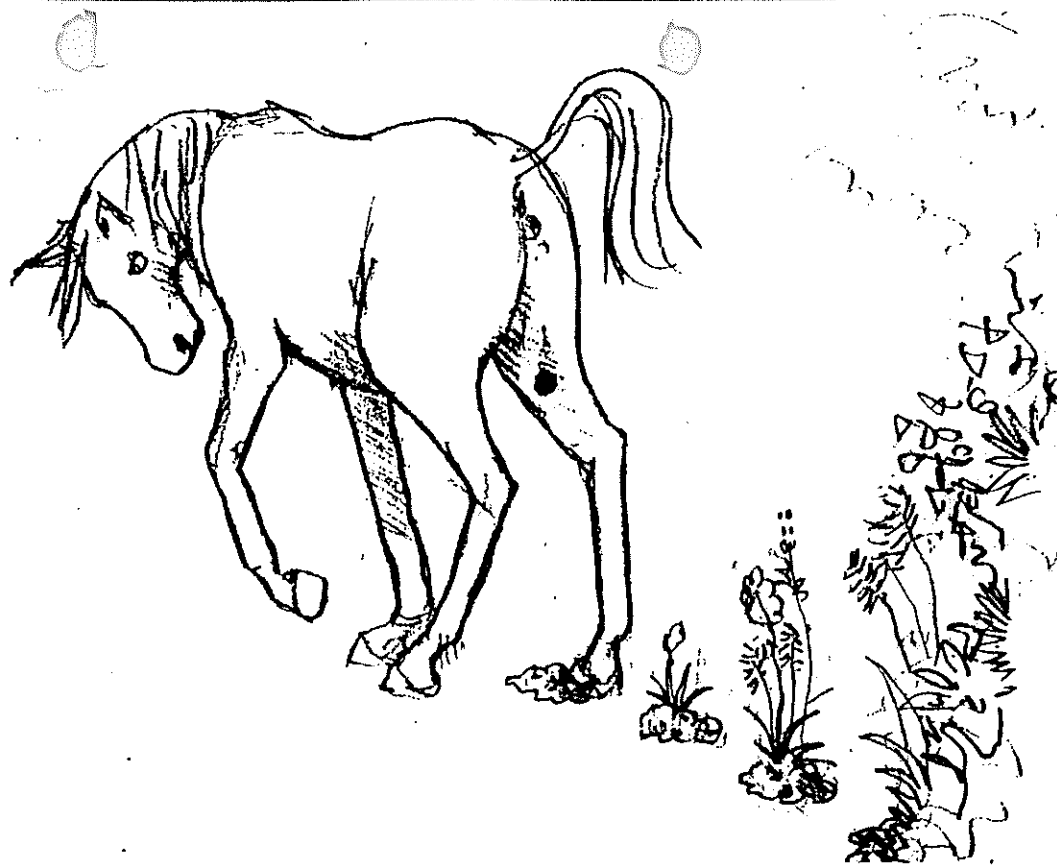
platypus had electro-receptors," I said. "No, we have them too, but at this stage we're keeping it a secret as to what we use them for," he said. "Tell you what though, they're great for training laboratory researchers to feed us frequently!" I'm sure he would have grinned with that small mouth at the tip of his snout if he could have. But he just ambled off with a distinctive rolling gait and snuffled through his nostrils, as echidnas are inclined to do.

Alan Bluhm

# HORSES AND WEEDS

Terry O'Brien has drawn our attention to a recent scientific paper on the subject of horses as a means of dispersing weeds. The project, carried out at the Roseworthy Agricultural College in South Australia, was supported by the S.A. Horse Council and the S.A. Recreation Institute to research the fate of weed seeds transmitted through the digestive tract of the horse and to write a report to enable accurate planning for the safe development of horse riding trails in South Australia.

The project involved recovery of seed from horse faeces and subsequent germination tests on the seed. The workers (R.S.



StJohn-Sweeting and K.A. Morris) used two experimental groups. In one, a mixture of pasture plant seeds was fed to the horses in their rations; in the other a mixture of weed seeds was used.

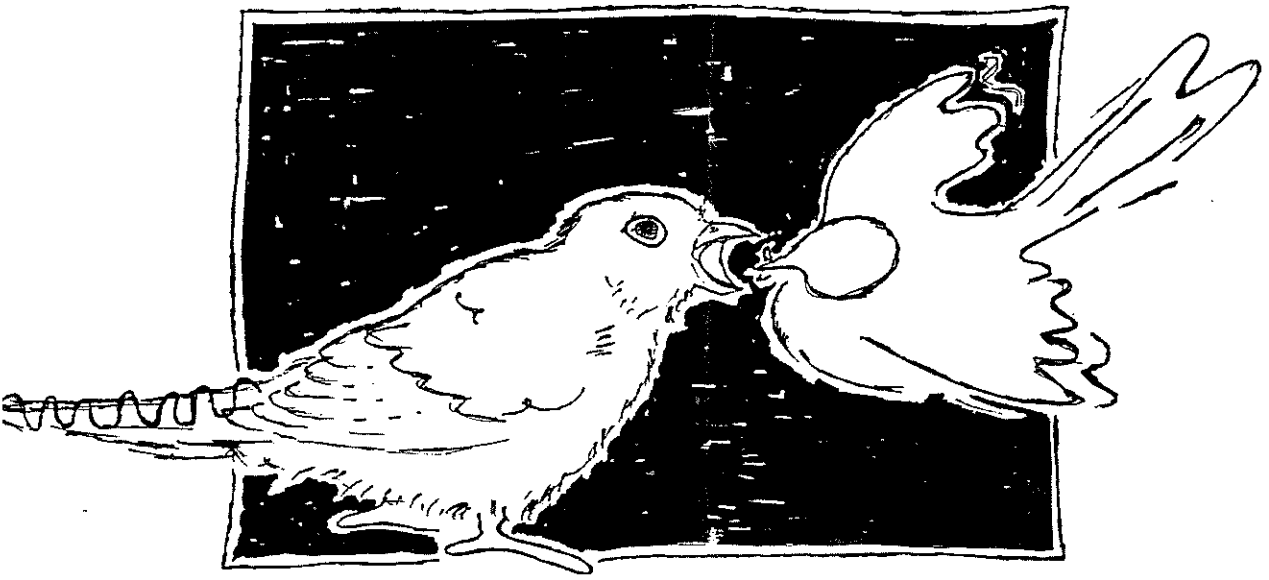
The results of the experiment show that there is little loss of viability (ability to germinate) of seeds after passing through the digestive tract of a horse. Seeds of one of the weed species tested (Onion Weed - NOT the Angled Onion

that we have) were digested by the horses and were therefore not viable in the faeces. It was also found that "horses will disperse weed seeds for (up to) 10 days after ingestion and pass relatively high levels 4 days after ingestion".

The results of this kind of research support the provisions in the Shire of Healesville Planning Scheme which prohibit the keeping of horses in the Environmental Living Zone. I have a copy of the original paper if anyone wants to read it.

John McCallum

# FAN-TAILED CUCKOO



(Cuculus Pyrrhophanus)

There are twelve species of cuckoo in Australia, five of them found in the ELZ. The Fan-tailed Cuckoo is the most commonly seen and its call, which is distinctive and penetrating, is regularly heard from early spring through to the end of summer. Its voice is a sad trill, descending in scale and repeated several times.

The Fan-tailed Cuckoo is a handsome medium-sized bird (245-270 mm) with slate-grey plumage, a rufous-cinnamon breast and a prominent yellow eye ring. Its tail is dark and notched white, giving a barred effect on the outer tail feathers.

The bird tends to be seen sitting on bare branches or other perches from which it sights prey, often capturing insects and taking them back to the same perch to eat. Hairy caterpillars are a favourite food.

One fascinating aspect of most cuckoos, including the Fan-tailed, is that they have no nest and depend entirely on other birds to raise their young. The Fan-tailed Cuckoo parasitises about fifty species of other birds - generally tiny dome-nesting thornbills, scrubwrens and fairy wrens -- particularly the Brown Thornbill.

Most of these dome-nests are constructed in such a way that the only access is through the side of the nest, via a hole much smaller than a cuckoo. For many years this observation left ornithologists wondering how the bird managed to deposit its eggs in such nests. The mystery was solved when a female cuckoo was observed carrying an egg in her bill and placing it into the nest of a "foster parent". Subsequent observations have shown that females will sometimes even remove existing eggs before placing their own similar-looking ones in to the nest. Fan-tailed Cuckoos' eggs usually hatch in a shorter time than the host eggs and, once hatched, the young cuckoo is also likely to eject other eggs; or, later, other young birds.

If, despite these manoeuvres, the host's young survive, the Fan-tailed Cuckoo has such a bright gape that it is more effective than other species at food-begging. Indeed, they are sometimes so irresistible that they are fed by birds of other species which just happen to be passing.

Many Fan-tailed Cuckoos, particularly immature birds, migrate north during winter and return again in the spring.

Anyone interested in observing these fascinating birds (or birds in general) before they head north is welcome to come along to one of BICA's monthly bird walks. Future dates are: 9 December, 8:30 a.m.; 13 January, 7:30 a.m. We meet at the water tank at the Henley Rd/Catani Blvd junction.

Robyn Duff

## WILDLIFE CARE NETWORK

The Wildlife Care Network was formed by a number of people holding wildlife shelter permits. The principal aim of the network is to provide sick, injured and orphaned wildlife with expert care as quickly as possible, and also to assist those dedicated and caring people carrying out this demanding task with as much physical and financial support as possible.

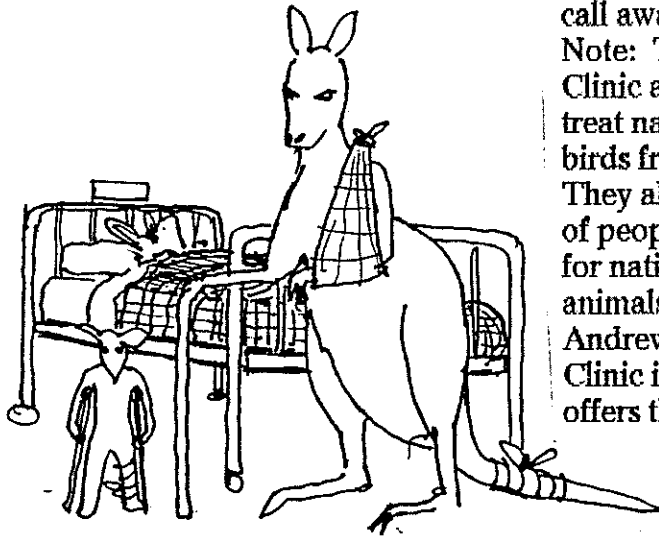
Wildlife Care Network has regular newsletters, workshops and seminars to update knowledge and care.

The Network is non-political and in principal, a care group with funding generated by subscription and fund-raising by members. There are many ways that people can assist: by joining (\$15 per annum), constructing nest boxes or hospital boxes, sewing pouches etc. If you are interested, phone the pager number. The Network has a pager service which is manned 24 hours per day within Victoria (and some interstate areas). One can dial the number and be directed to the nearest wildlife shelter, or arrangements can be made to have the creature needing care to be collected. Initial first aid information is given to the caller.

Help is now just a phone call away. 016. 373 931

Note: The Veterinary Clinic at Research will treat native mammals and birds free of charge.

They also have a network of people who will care for native and domestic animals. Also Chris Andrews Veterinary Clinic in Hurstbridge offers the same service.



Tim Ealey

## HISTORICAL TIT BIT

Tony Harvey discovered an article in the Herald the other week relating how others felt about our area in years gone by. We certainly weren't the first to appreciate this little neck of the woods.

*Remember  
bring your  
own seat  
on Sunday  
16th  
2-5pm to  
"Atunga"  
Henley Rd  
(O'Brien's)  
Music and  
Morsels  
\$8.0 per  
person,  
every one  
will be  
there!*

Marg Woiwod  
712 0563 and  
Sheila Dixon  
712 0542

**Y**ARRA Glen is 45 km from Melbourne, between Eltham and Healesville.

The locals will tell you that Joseph Furphy, pseudonymous author of the "offensively Australian" classic *Such is Life*, was born on the site where the local school now stands.

The Furphy family moved to nearby Kangaroo Ground, where young Joseph started his schooling. A plaque commemorating the association with Furphy was unveiled at the Yarra Glen school by Vance Palmer during the Depression.

More recently the town has bathed in the glory bestowed on it by the distinguished novelist Martin Boyd. In his autobiography, published a few years before his lonely death in Rome in 1972, Boyd recalled his school holidays there.

"I think I was happier at Yarra Glen than I have been at any other time in my life," he disclosed in *Day of my Delight*. "The country was beautiful in itself and my imagination clothed it with poetic significance."

Those joyous times are reflected in Boyd's first major book, *The Montforts*, where Raoul's home, like the author's, was on the banks of the Yarra and the lad spent his holidays horseriding in the hills and swimming in the river.

The author's love of the Yarra Valley also emerges in his novel *Lucinda Brayford*.

His heroine, before moving to live overseas, took her hus-

band for a roadside picnic at Christmas Hills overlooking Yarra Glen:

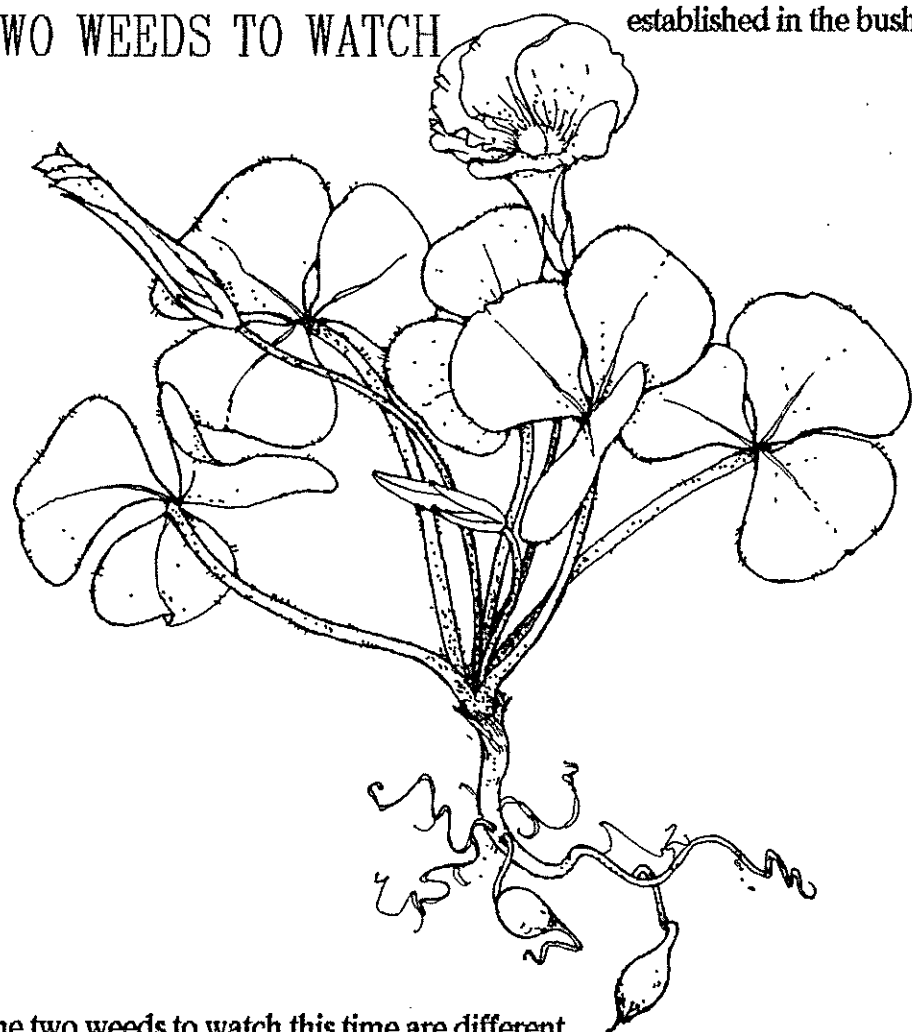
*After luncheon they climbed the hill above the road (probably Skyline Rd). From its summit they had a view for many miles to the Black Spur and the mountains of Healesville, which were blue and gold and splashed with deep purple shadows.*

In 1948, Martin Boyd, aged 55, made a nostalgic return to the township. "I felt as if I was returning to the true home of my spirit ... the one place I had felt a sense of belonging ... I departed not knowing that this was my last visit to Yarra Glen."

The views over Yarra Glen township from Christmas Hills are spectacular. Mt Dandenong, with its television towers, is easy to identify on the right; far behind the town are Donna Buang and the Baw Baws in the Great Dividing Range; to the left with twin fire lookout towers is Mt St Leonard — Toolangi is at its base.

Skyline Rd, unmade, runs along the ridge and affords other outstanding views.

# TWO WEEDS TO WATCH



The two weeds to watch this time are different from each other in a number of respects. One is widespread in our area, the other is just creeping in; one is reasonable easy to control by physical means, the other is quite intractable. The relative newcomer is *Oxalis purpurea* which has just finished flowering, the other which is well

established in the bush is *Centaurium*. It flowers in January.

*Oxalis purpurea* This species, like so many of our pests, is a deliberate introduction. Its attractive flowers make it a popular rockery plant and I heard that it is on sale in nurseries still. Like a number of species in the genus *Oxalis*, it proliferates mainly by bulb-like structures (called bulbils) which are generated on the underground part of the plant. When you try to pull the plant out of the ground these become detached and a number of them remain behind, no matter how careful you think you are being. It is regarded as being virtually indestructible by physical means. *O. purpurea* has the typical *Oxalis* leaf subdivided into three leaflets, each leaflet NOT having a notch in the end like some species. The leaf stems are purplish-red and are quite hairy, as are the backs and margins of the leaves themselves. The bulbils can be seen if you examine the roots and are whitish in colour. The showy flowers are pink

to purple in colour, often white or yellow at the base. In the Bend of Islands it is well established on roadsides at the upper intersection of Catani Blvd and Henley Rd. Only a couple of years ago there was only a small patch of it. Now it is spreading into the area beside the Fire Station and is probably on the march down the hill!

Watch out for this species. Small infestations may be able to be eliminated by repeated, very careful weeding followed by total destruction (burning in a stove) but we will probably have to resort to chemical control in the area mentioned above. It would appear that the "Zero" and "Roundup" type of herbicide would do the trick. *Oxalis corniculata* has smaller chrome-yellow flowers and does not have bulbils; it probably is easier to control by physical means such as careful weeding.

*Centaurium* species There are a number of species of *Centaurium* (Centaury) native to Europe and the Middle East, which have been naturalized in this country. Specific identification can be difficult, particularly as the various species can hybridize. At least one form is widely present in our bush. Centaury has pink flowers at the end of an erect, quadrangular stem which bears pairs of leaves, arranged in opposite pairs. In some forms this erect stem arises from a horizontal rosette of leaves. Centaury can be removed from an area by concentrated weeding, the plants can be left where they are picked. When the plants are in flower they are both easy to spot and easy to grasp; the rosette without the erect flowering stalk is not so easy to remove.

John McCallum

This is a story of self-discovery. One dedicated band of gliding, chiding, caring bickering choughs discovered they could train a couple of humans to feed them almost on demand. At the same time, one human discovered he really delighted in the bushland he lived in while one civilized human discovered her delight in things wild.

Softly -- 'beep, beep, beep' -- the rush of gliding wings outstretched until the very last moment of landing and we arrive. Despite the cold she jumps up, fills her hand with seed and comes outside, gently opening the door and talking all the while: "Hello, choughies. Cold, isn't it? Like some seed?"

Silly question, that's what we were training her to do wasn't it?

"Awkkk, cheeep, beep: -- fluttering and fussing we all manage to snatch beak fulls of the tasty seed which she'd put down on tree stumps and in saucers.

After awhile, we humour them both by taking seed from their hands when they hold it near the ground. Because chough personalities are as varied as human, some eat their fill continuously, others are wary and take one seed at a time, running back in between, while still others stay right back relying on us racier members of the group to sweep plenty of seed on to the ground for them.

## CHARLIE CHOUGH

Eventually, as the bravest member of the tribe -- Charlie, that's me -- I decide to create a bit of theatre for these strange humans. I fluff myself up, jump from car to rafter to stump to the ground and generally act extremely excited before swooping onto their outstretched hands full of seed held out at their height instead of on the ground. It gets 'em every time!

Of course, those pesky, cheeky rosellas have tried to muscle in on the act although they are still scared to land on the humans and eat; however one or two eat from the woman's hand at ground level. Plus there's competition from magpies, currawongs and even those squawky cockatoos these days. So, we knew something had to be done to keep choughs as favourites.

Luckily, it was nearly spring. Often now the doors to their large earth nest were wide open. It seemed an invitation to me -- especially as they got a little lazy and stood within the doors. I still scattered the seed, eating my fill at once, then after organising the rest, I'd remember where there was more so it seemed normal to just take a stroll back inside the human's nest.

Cool, smooth dark ground at first so it was easy to pick out the food, but then there was softer ground with even more variety -- in and out of strange pieces of wood, hopping here and there -- the

humans were accepting, they just smiled and said "Hi, Charlie."

But, it was all very well to play with them and get a good feed as well, time was I needed to forage for more than my own well being. The humans noticed: "Get a good beak full, Charlie," they's say, "take it back to the nest for the kids."

We knew we'd chosen a great spot, close to this regular source of food, but not too close. Mind you, those humans were pretty clever -- for humans -- they found the nest. Turning their necks up to the sky, they oohed and aahed every time one of the kids showed their beaks over the edge of the nest -- we didn't mind, we knew they were the greatest kids in Kangaroo Ground!

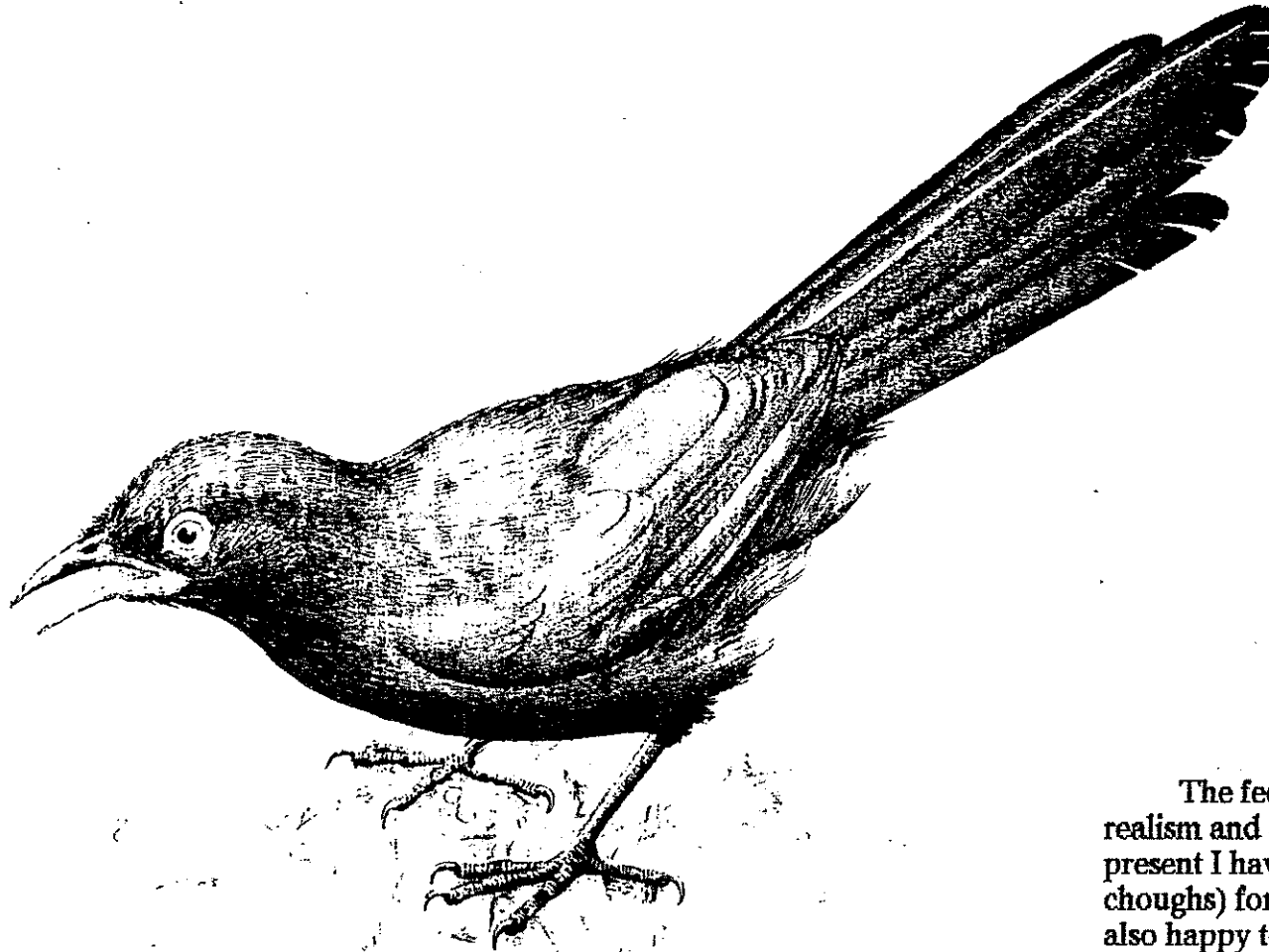
We'll teach them that these humans are OK, but they must keep their heads about them and not get carried away with befriending every Hatty and Harry Human. We'll teach them how to scrounge the ground for tasty morsels in the wild as well as understand the rules of the flock -- they'll be fine.

Our humans seem to know we need to take the kids around a bit and show them the territory -- luckily they are always there just when we need a bit of a rest and a good feed!

Barb Whiter



## PORTRAITS OF OUR NATIVE BIRDS



Andrew Skeoch

'90

Hello! Sarah and I have moved into John and Glenny's house on the Co-op for a year. Living in a native environment is wonderful and we are both appreciating the presence of our native birdlife which over the years has inspired my talents for drawing. I am currently working quite intensively, developing and promoting my skills in the hope that they may be of lasting pleasure and reward to everyone.

All drawings are from life. I illustrate with coloured pencils, which give a soft luminous feel in representing plumage. I have a passion for fine detail and accuracy and a work may take eight or more hours to finish.

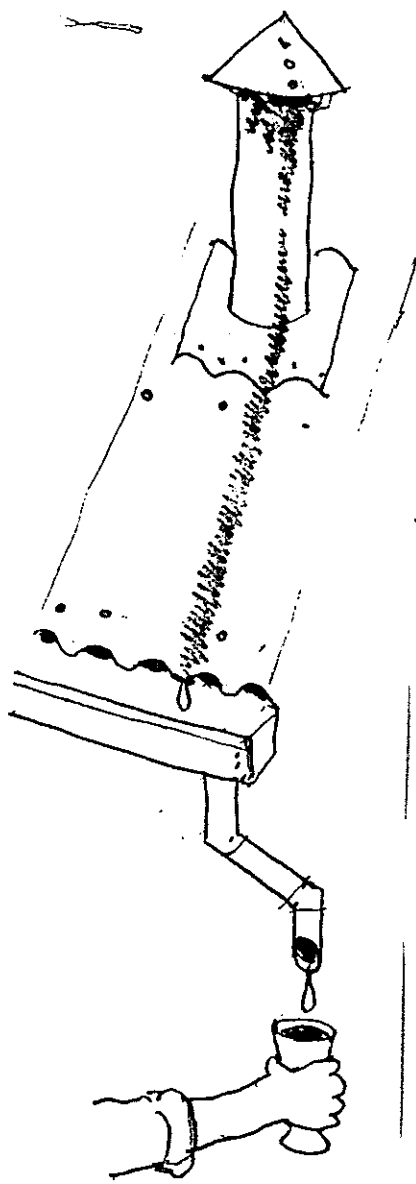
The feedback I've had so far, on ground of both realism and aesthetics, has been most enthusiastic. At present I have a selection of work (including choughs) for sale at very affordable prices, and I'm also happy to accept commissions. I feel that each drawing is an investment in fine artwork and in enhancing our living spaces with images of the characters who inhabit our local bushland.

Andrew Skeoch (ph. 7120486)

- 4 SEP 1990



# WHAT ARE WE DRINKING?



Most of us congratulate ourselves on not having to drink the mystery cocktail that comes out at the taps in suburban Melbourne, although compared with other cities in both Australia and overseas it isn't too bad. Terry O'Brien was concerned about possible contamination of roof-collected rain water by "fall-out" from burning certain materials in solid fuel burners. Here is the letter that he received from the EPA in reply to his query. It is worth noting that the "polyaromatic hydrocarbons" referred to in the letter will be present in ordinary wood smoke and indeed are the carcinogens in tobacco smoke. What we don't know is the amount of these materials in the smoke, the amount that lands on our roofs and how much ends up in our drinking water. It does seem however that burning printed paper products in the stove does not present any added health hazard! John McCallum.

Dr Terry O'Brien  
 "Atunga"  
 Henley Road  
 KANGAROO GROUND VIC 3097

Our Ref: 905219B

Dear Dr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter of 8 August 1990, concerning possible heavy metal and smoke contamination of roof collected drinking water from the burning of colour printed newspapers, magazines or cartons in domestic wood stoves. I am replying on the Minister's behalf.

We have checked our records and the Environment Protection Authority does not appear to have received your earlier letter.

In answer to your enquiries, printing inks and ancillary pigments, in current use, contain no toxic metals such as cadmium, lead, antimony or mercury. However there may be trace quantities, in the parts per billion range, of copper originating from phthalocyanine pigments. Such levels are not harmful.

Therefore, when newsprint and magazine paper and coloured cartons are completely burnt emissions will consist of the normal products of combustion expected from paper or cardboard. These emissions may contain polyaromatic hydrocarbons, which may be carcinogenic.

At present we cannot provide you with any literature on this subject. However, we are seeking this information from overseas and will send it to you when it arrives.

If you need to follow this matter further feel free to contact Mr Hugh Evans of the Projects Branch on 628 5679.

Yours sincerely

CHRIS BELL  
 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - PROJECTS

TERRY/ig/Disk 6d

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

## Committee Activities

As well as organising the usual functions which have been well attended, the Committee has been involved in the following issues:

### 1. Sailing in Sugarloaf Reservoir

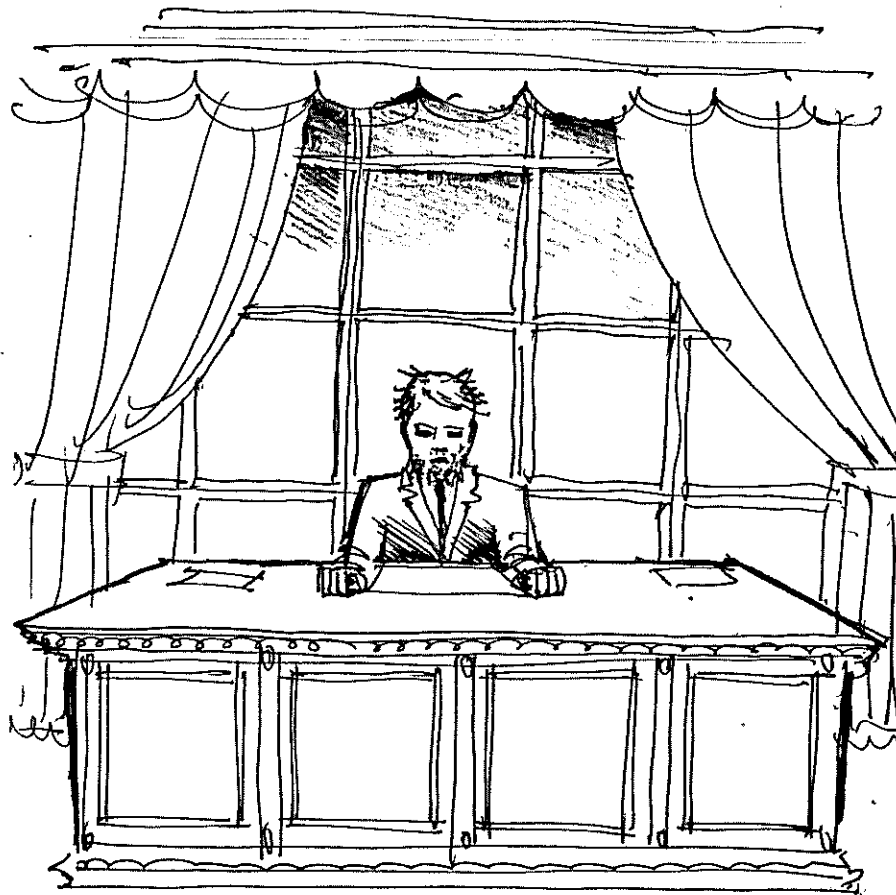
Presentation of submissions on the proposal for a Sugarloaf Sailing Club to introduce recreational sailing on the Reservoir.

The current proposal does not adequately address the issue of control of numbers and the consequent impact on the ELZ such as the likely increase in traffic through the area. We have expressed these sentiments to both the Sailing Club Steering Committee and the MMBW.

### 2. Subdivision of Wells Property

We have objected to the application to subdivide the Wells Property immediately west of Oxley Bridge. The Shire of Eltham has rejected the application.

The proposal is not in accordance with Eltham's Planning Scheme and is inappropriate for land of such high environmental significance. The owners have appealed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and we will be making a



presentation to the Tribunal hearing.

### 3. Clearing of Fence at Wells Property

We have objected to the Shire of Eltham regarding the clearing and construction of a new barbed wire fence on the Wells Property in Henley Road. This clearing has occurred prior to obtaining a permit and the five strand barbed wire fence

is inappropriate for the land which is zoned "Conservation A", borders Watsons Creek and is a haven for wildlife.

We will be making a presentation to the Shire of Eltham's Planning Committee Hearing on this issue.

### 4. UYVDRA Strategy Plan

We have made a presentation to the River Panel for the UYVDRA Amended Strategy Plan. The Strategy Plan sets the basis for control of development in the Yarra Valley, including protection of the natural environment for the next decade.

### 5. Roadside Management Strategy

We have made initial approaches to the Shire of Healesville regarding the development of a Roadside Management Strategy to the ELZ.

The roadside vegetation is a significant resource which is under threat of degradation from service agencies, road users and the effects of weed invasion. We aim to produce a clearly enunciated, rational plan which co-ordinates all works which occur on the roadsides so that they can be carried out in the most environmentally sensitive manner.

## FIRE BRIGADE FAMILY DAY

Yesterday (Sunday 11/11) was a special day. Out of comings and goings in store car parks, quick phone calls and hustled meetings when just nobody had enough time, we managed to fling together an event of some substance.

At the very outset though, I must remark that Marg Woiwod provided the impetus to forge ahead with us troops doing exactly what we were told! Was it somebody up there who said delegation is the name of the game?

The day was special because practically everyone from our widely dispersed area turned up. It rather reminded me of those days you see advertised for the family of Garfinkels or whoever having an Australia-wide reunion. People talked to each other, burnt snags, stuffed cakes and quiches into their mouths and generally mixed in. No one fell over dead drunk or had a fight behind the toilet block -- it was a well-behaved crowd,

Speaking of toilet blocks, that well known local plumbing service. Jackman and Neale, hooked us up to something or other that actually worked. Just ring 7120458 for prompt and efficient service, reasonable rates and fully itemised account.

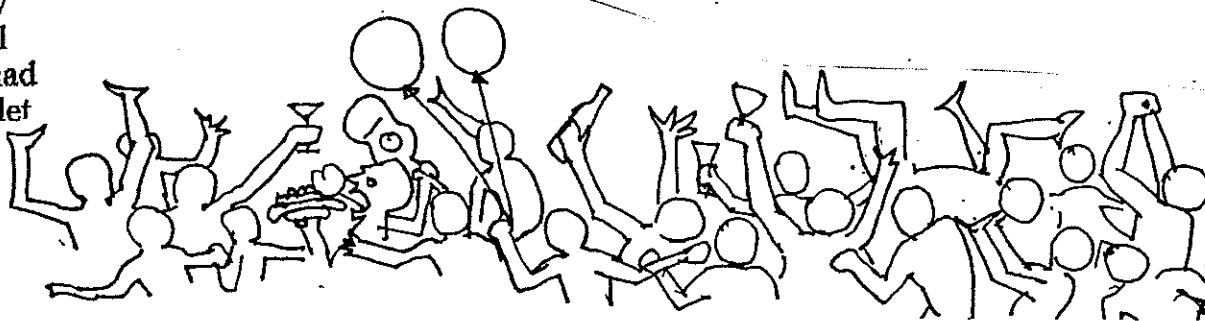
The music! Now that was something! Seb Jorgenson provided beautiful classical guitar in a possible first - a metal fire shed. Thanks, Seb. Then just by contrast there was our rock band consisting of Nik, Caitlan, Colin, Kate, Jamie and Miles who give us great music and some very pro singing. My aging rocker ears picked up one of my old favourite Led Zeppelin numbers.

The food -- it all went -- that's the main thing. So many people pitched in and helped sell it, eat it, pay for it and cook it. And a special thanks to Margaret's chooks who took the trouble to lay the eggs for my quiches.

Neil's wheel, the raffle, Claire's radiogram, Nick's fixing of the BBQ -- I could go on. Rather than all the names of everyone who helped, let's all take a pat on the back and do it again next pre-Xmas. Now that we know what's successful, it's easy. Incidentally, it looks as though we made about \$900.

Last of all, thanks to our gallant brigade, young ones and old ones (in executive years of course), and I hope the new brass helmets we are buying you fit nicely. And don't forget to sign on that young person James Peterson for Brigade duties in about 14 years time. He looks as though he has potential.

Sheila Dixon





# B.I.W.G. - BEND OF ISLANDS WALKING GROUP

Membership: predominantly female, males on demand.

Frequency: weekly

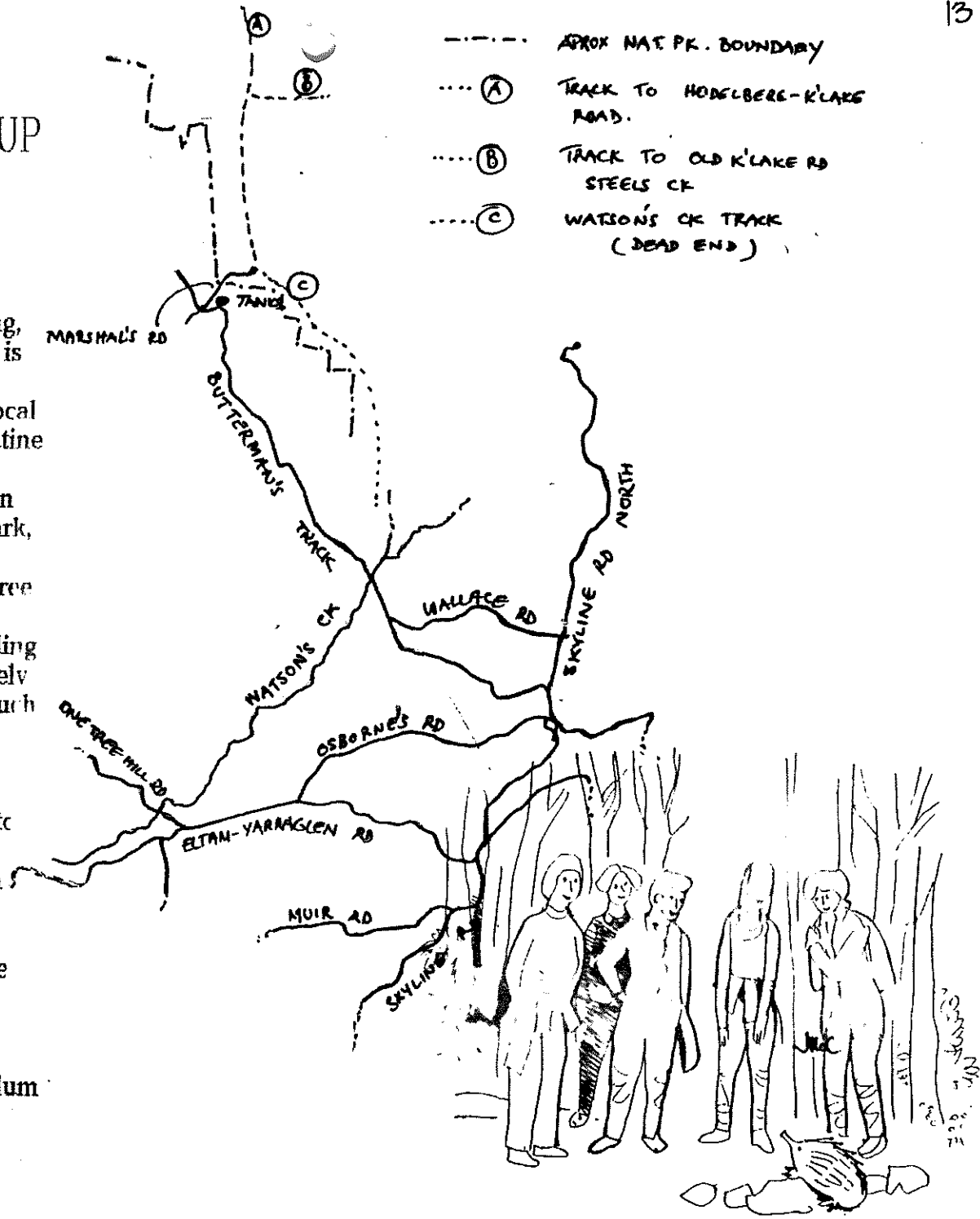
Day: Friday

Venue: Fisher's, Catani Boulevarde

Time: 9:00 a.m.

The group guarantees expert training in Himalayan trekking, African safaris, Zen meditation and gourmet travelling. The aim is to amaintain a core of serious and dedicated walkers willing to brave extremes of terrain and climate in the exploration or our local natural delights. There are times however when this rigorous routine is interrupted by more frivolous pursuits. One such occasion occurred recently on Show Day when sexual barriers were broken down for a walk in the southern part of the Kinglake National Park, starting at the end of Marshall's Road off Buttermans Track in Christmas Hills. The National Park is quite extensive, being in three disjunct sections and including a variety of scenery and wildlife habitats. This part of the Park is quite dry and although horse riding appears to be permitted, the vegetation so far seems to be relatively free from weed invation. There were many spring flowers and much evidence of Lyre Bird activity. The track followed the ridge and afforded good views of the surrounding countryside. The sketch map shows only the southern area of the Park; more information and maps are available from the ministry of C.&E. In deference to the visitors the usual harsh standards were relaxed somewhat, allowing for close investigation of the flora and fauna as well as a little social intercourse. The occasion was amply recorded for posterity by Mike Pelling and Tony Harvey. The high quality of catering was maintained on this walk and upon arrival back at the cars we partook of a light morning tea of cheesecake, pastries, chocolate cake and coffee, the last laced with a little brandy for those who felt a bit weak after their exertions.

Meg McCullum



## THE MOBILE BIRD WATCHER

Being a confirmed bird watcher while wandering about the countryside is an extremely safe occupation, but I suspect doing it from my car has other dubious connotations. One thing though, I don't use my binoculars while driving -- that's not on.

I began making a list of odd sightings a few months ago, sightings which nearly all took place in an unusual or suburban setting. The list grew, so here it is.

As I left Henley Rd. one morning and headed onto the main road, there was a white-faced heron standing like a piece out of a Chinese painting on that cut off triangle of land where the old road was. An opportunist from way back, he'd found his breakfast and suddenly made that nondescript bit of land into something of value.

Further on along the main road near the Telecom cellular installation tower a grey goshawk hovers. Sometimes she sits on the phone wires and at other times is up there among the energy emanating from the tower looking for small prey in the grass. I hope her eggs don't get addled.

I forgot, we've passed the Kanga tip and all those grubby bustling ibis. Not a pretty sight. Somehow ibis haven't quite got their act together with the personal hygiene. But with so much of a free lunch to pick through I suppose it's understandable.

Shopping at Eltham provides a few thrills too. At the back of the market are large rubbish skips. Australian ravens can often be seen

having a simply glorious time in them. What culinary delights await them. I bet they know exactly when the skips are full. I've seen a parent bird feeding her babies-- 'Eat it all up, dear -- What, you don't like that? -- Well, try this one!'

In the bits of trees and shrubs through that 'beautiful' car park the ubiquitous noisy minors can be seen doing their noisy thing. 'The tree they land on is never the right one...' 'That one over there with that particularly loud bird is the one I want!' 'Go get 'em, Minnie!'

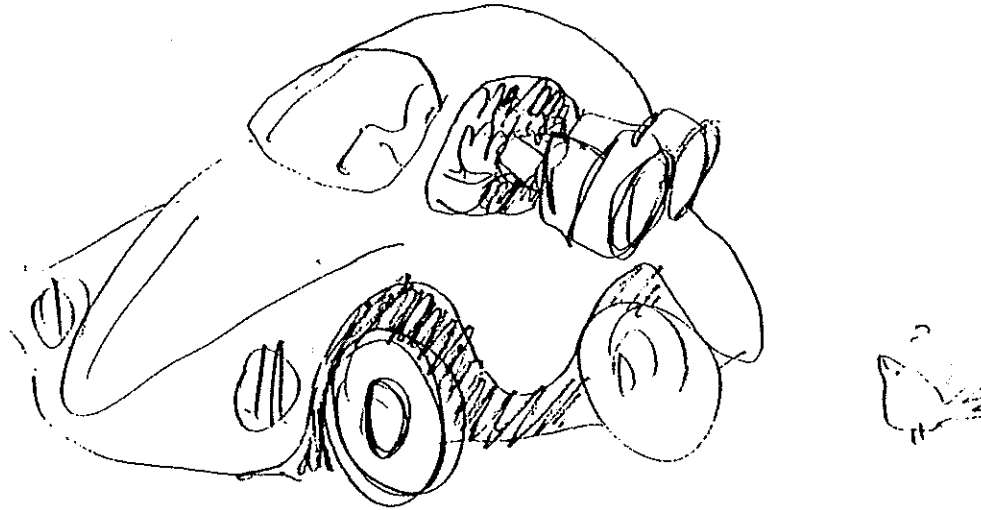
If I'm heading down to my family in Elwood I go along the freeway. I bet most of you have seen the galahs and cockatoos on the median strip there. I reckon the Kanga tip looks much more promising than that strip of grass, but then we never stop to go and look, do we? But there they are, feeding away. Any suggestions?

Down in Elwood, the nicest touch is the spur wing plover families along the Elwood Canal. My daughter lives near the beach and the canal has wide and grassy banks. The plovers always 'have a go' at her elderly labrador if he walks

a little too near their nest. Once upon a time he would have woofed at them but now there's his arthritis and deafness to contend with so the plovers are safe. Over on the golf course the willie wagtails bombard the golfers and occasionally with pleasure I see a small sparrow hawk fishing the sky.

I'm sure this list could go on -- there've been eagles and owls, robins and cuckoos -- but car bird watching gets a bit dicey so I'll keep my eye on the road for a while.

Sheila Dixon



SUMMER SOLSTICE B.B.Q.

B.Y.O. ON 22ND DECEMBER 1990

12 NOON ONWARDS

AT TIM & LAURA'S

BRING YOUR FRIENDS

Co-Ordinator's thanks to all those behind the scenes in the production of these newsletters.

- Carol Anne Fisher does all the typing
- Wendy Bradley checks through the text
- Jeff Neale does the cut and paste on his computer
- Illustrations are by Toney Harvey, Dave Bradley Ross and Cric Henry and Andrew Skeoch.
- Sheila Dixon does the printing off
- Lots of locals help with the collating and posting

Thanks also for the contribution of text. If anybody out there has something to add for the next newsletter, please contact me. Thanks again,

WURSTADTGE  
100E-D  
VIC-AUST