

BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

JM-2

Number 31

WHAT NATIVE'S FLOWERING?

Botanical name: *ERIOCHILUS CUCULLATUS*

Common name: Parson's Bands

Family: Orchidaceae - Orchid family

ERIOCHILUS CUCULLATUS is an Autumn flowering orchid and many of its features are typical of all orchids. These include the three outer segments called sepals and the three inner segments called petals. One of these petals is the labellum which is referred to as the tongue of the orchid which ensures cross pollination by insects. The column of the orchid is the combination of the style, stigma and stamens into a single member above the ovary.

The genus *ERIOCHILUS* is endemic to Australia and *ERIOCHILUS CUCULLATUS* is the only species of the genus occurring in the Eastern states.

The name "*ERIOCHILUS*" is derived from the Greek "erio" - woolly and "chilus" - lipped or tongued and refers to the labellum which is covered with woolly hairs.

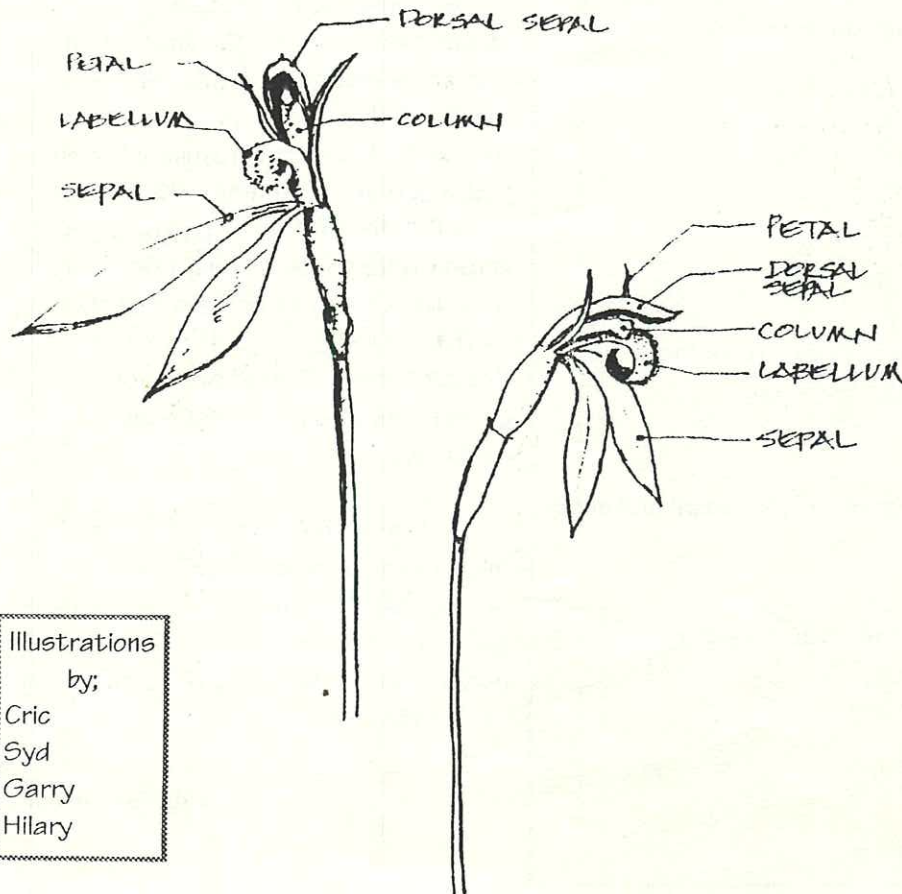
Parson's Bands has two relatively large sepals and one

much smaller erect one which emerges from the back of the column and is hooded (the dorsal sepal). The two larger sepals are the main distinguishing features of this little orchid and give the orchid its common name "Parson's Bands". These sepals are 10 - 16mm. long and extend stiffly forward resembling the two hanging strips of neckband worn by the clergy. *ERIOCHILUS* has one relatively large petal, the labellum or tongue, and two very slender erect ones. The tongue curves inwards on itself between the two sepals and is covered with hairs and purple dots to attract insects.

The flowers are usually solitary on brown wiry stems 5 - 15cm. high. The flowers can last for several weeks until pollination occurs and once pollinated the flower quickly withers. Once flowering has finished a single shiny dark green leaf 35 cm. long develops at the base of the stem and will remain until summer producing and storing food for next years flower. The orchid is dormant over summer with only its small onion shaped bulb remaining in the ground.

ERIOCHILUS CUCULLATUS prefers a moist to dry well drained soil and may be propagated by spreading seeds around established plants,

Cric Henry.



Illustrations
by;
Cric
Syd
Garry
Hilary

A SOLUTION TO THE "LBBB BLUES"

The thornbills! Forever on the move, faster than a speeding bullet and

so small that they all look the same. One solution to the identification problem is to enter them into your field notebook as LBBBs (Little Brown Bush Birds).

That's OK for a while but at some stage you will get to know the "fee-orr" voice of the Brown or the dazzling yellow flash of the Yellow Rumped. Curiosity will get the better of you, frustration will set in and

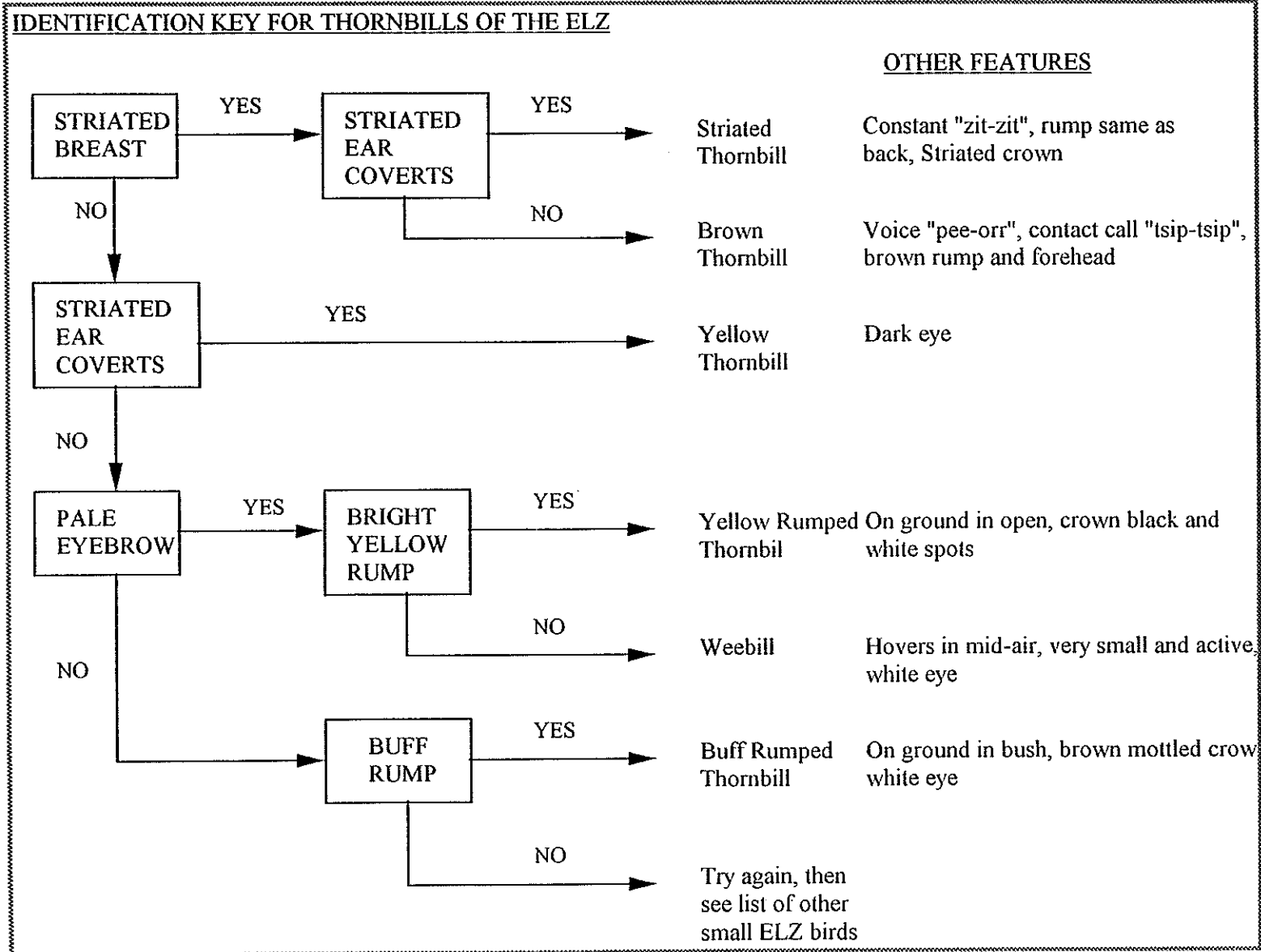
you'll be afflicted with the LBBB Blues.

Having been down this tortuous path, my advice is "don't give up!" There is light at the end of the tunnel; it can be done! Each of the little villains has at least one or two distinguishing features and once you get onto these the problem is not the impossible nightmare that it initially seemed.

With the help of Slater and Pizzey I have developed an identification key for the six LBBBs that are found in the ELZ. They are the Weebill and five species of thornbill. This key is restricted to the features that differentiate the species; for a full description of any bird you should refer to the books. For example from the key it can be seen that the Buff-Rumped has a buff rump, it doesn't have a striated breast or ear coverts nor does it have a pale eyebrow.

Also listed are the other small birds of the area and their main distinguishing features. If you come to the end of the key without success you may not be looking at a thornbill but at one of these.

Frank Pierce



OTHER SMALL BIRDS IN THE ELZ

SPECIES	DISTINGUISHING FEATURES
White Browed Scrubwren	Black & white marks on shoulder
Silvereye	White eye ring
Spotted Pardalote	Colours, voice "sweet baby"
Striated Pardalote	High in trees, colours, voice "whit-whit"
Suberb Fairy Wren	Tail
Red Browed Firetail	Red brow and rump
White Throated Warbler	White throat!
Jacky Winter	Tail movement, size
Robins	Colours, females harder
Fantails	Tail, colours
Sitella	Movements like Treecreeper

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"Weebill" is certainly a good name for our smallest bird. Its beak is so tiny, no doubt a reflection of the overall size of the bird itself but very definitely a high precision tool, ideally suited to its task of removing tiny insects from their hiding places on plants. The scientific name reflects all of this. In the generic name *Smicromis* we recognize "micro" (small) and "ornis" (bird). The specific adjective *brevirostris* translates as short (brief) beak. So: "the tiny bird with the short beak"

Thornbills belong to the genus *Acanthiza*. In this name we see the Greek word which comes out in Roman characters roughly as "aki" which means a point (thorn). The name "Acacia", the wattle genus comes from the same root; the first named species from Europe or the Middle East must have been thorny.

The various kinds of Thornbill have their own special species name and as you can see these are descriptive of the animal.

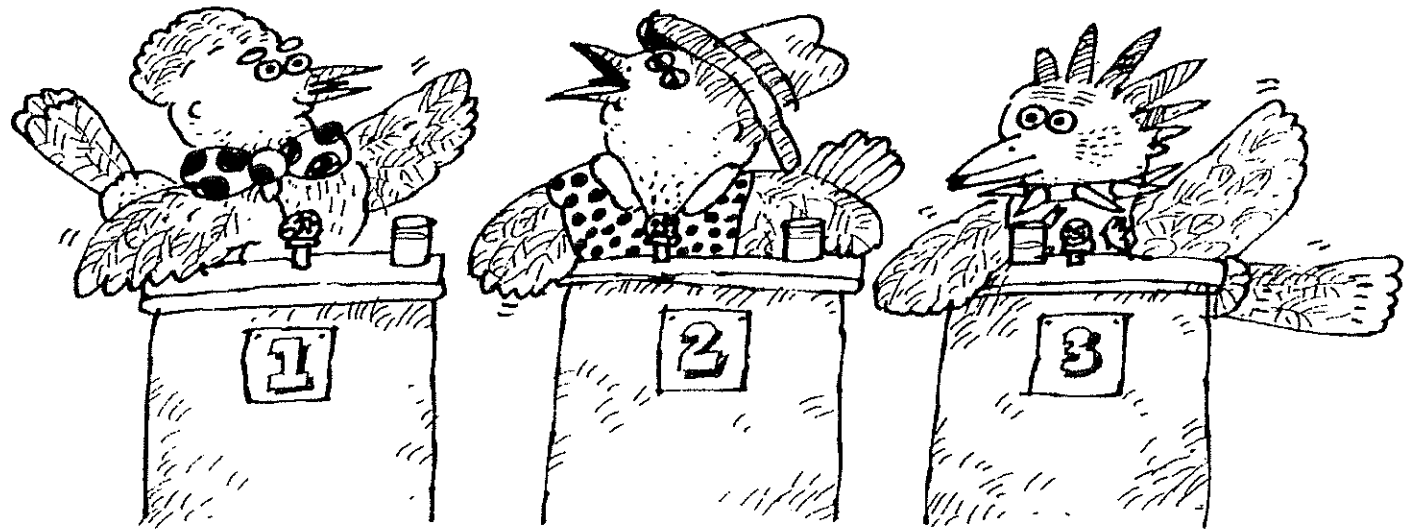
Brown Thornbill (*A. pusilla*); "pusilla" means very small.

Yellow Thornbill, also known as the Little Thornbill (*A. nana*); "nana" is another word referring to small size.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill (*A. chrysorrhoa*); "chrysos" means gold.

Striated Thornbill (*A. lineata*); obviously referring to the stripes on the head.

John McCallum



... WILL THE REAL YELLOW STRIATED, BROWNISH RUMPED WEE WEE BILL PLEASE STAND UP!!

KINDERGARTEN OF THE AIR

Just for a change I thought I would leave the individual birds for this issue and settle on the comings and goings of the fledglings of last spring.

Where to start? I think that the maggies were first this year and I have been able to watch a real character grow up. It had no siblings and left its parents quite early. We call it 'Little Mag' and it still quite grey and fluffy. But it has always done for itself. It cottoned on to the fact that I fed my Kooka daily so it tends to hang around him and battles with Kooka for the tucker. Little Mag has not quite mastered the act of landing gracefully on a branch yet and flies in at a very strange angle. Feet stretched out in front then a flapping grab for the branch. I'm sure he'll get better with practice.

Those ubiquitous choughs. I've got a bird bath on my deck and if you've seen seven, yes seven choughs in the bath together, well.....The babies aren't game yet and hover nearby getting a bit of splash from the parents. There is so much wing shuffling that they use the water up and wait for me to fill the bath with the hose. Willie Wagtail brings his young family too but they all have to wait until he is finished.

The other day a mumma crow came down with two babies in tow. I had thrown out a corn cob so she took it to the bird bath and proceeded to soften it

up. A lot of yarking from the kids she fed them bits which she dipped in the water. I love the crows with their satin feathers and the sideways approach with food. Ready to pounce and ready to fly.

Then there are all the parrots and those rotten cockies. Have you ever watched young cockies

elicate pink with brown eyes for the males and blue for the females. Crimson Rosellas are very different from the parents. They seem quite large and are a strong green colour with a blue wing. They trail around helplessly with the parent uttering a hoarse squawking sound which apparently drives the parent to distraction. Eastern Rosella present as very faded replicas of the parents and look as though they have been dipped in bleach.

Kooka brings his family of four to visit and sometimes they all sit on a branch nearby and kook away there fairly professionally. He is a very responsible Dad.

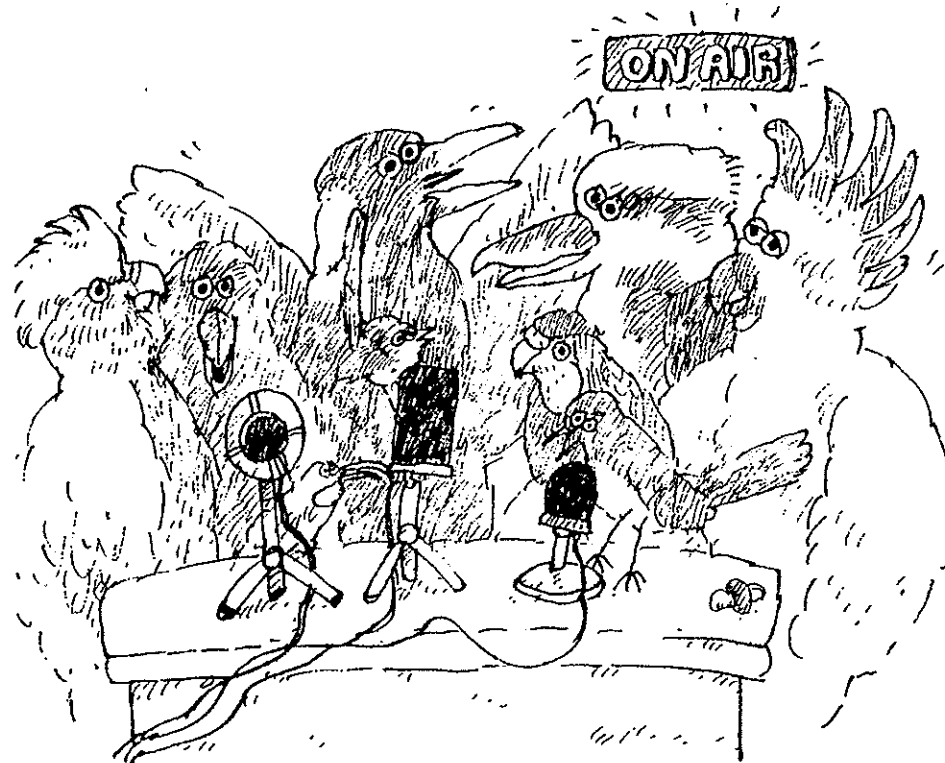
Alas the swallows didn't make it this year. Just as the babies were born on my front verandah, along came Kooka and a Butcher Bird. Ta-ta baby swallow.

The largest babies I've had around here were Grey Currawongs. Despite their size they seem to be the most nervous of all. But perhaps its because of the Bell Birds. They seem to hate the Currawongs more than any other bird and make it hell for them.

I mainly seem to get the larger birds round my place. Barb gets the smaller ones for she has a different type of garden. Fuchsias round her deck bring

the Spinebills and Scrub Wrens. She also has a beautiful family of Grey Shrike Thrushes. I'm trying to steal them but am not having much luck!

Sheila Dixon.



... AND FEATURING, LIVE IN THE STUDIO OF LIFE
THE FABULOUS, THE EXCITING, THE 'JUNIOR CHORUS LINE

being fed? A most violent business with the parent jamming half-digested food down the throat of the baby with a loud squeaking noise. As they get older the parent bird offers the food nearly raw.

The prettiest ones are the baby Galahs. Such a

(Continued from page 5)

the glass case at the local milk bar. Freckles, raspberries and bullets, then white knights and rainbow balls, liquorice blocks and clinkers...my eyes dim with memory.

One day we got into shocking trouble. We had been down the beach early and decided to a bit of excavation work with some large shovels. We managed to dig a large collection of trenches right across the whole beach, fairly deep and probably rather dangerous as far as cave-ins were concerned. We thought it was a pretty good engineering feat but not so our mothers. Of course they are just party poopers and had no imagination at all (but perhaps they had).

I must ask around, but I'm not sure about the fire brigade situation here in the thirties and forties. Luckily we just missed out on Black Friday; I'm not sure how. I remember that Grandma Oxley who was very deaf and couldn't hear over the phone rang my Dad in Middle park and just kept calling out over the line to come and get her because she was afraid of all the smoke. But in general, whether it was because we were just kids or whether bush fires weren't planned for in the same way as today, there didn't seem to be the same awareness about them. I suspect they were regarded as inevitable. I still shudder at the fires that we lit that didn't burn the place down!

At the end of this blissful time school eventually loomed. The final act here was to troop over to Grandma's and wait for the handout of pocket money she was so generous with. The older you were the more you got and five shillings went a long way in those days. Then it was a brown and freckled lot who drove home back to the city through Clifton

Hill and Collingwood to Middle Park by the sea. I used to feel sorry for those kids who had to spend their holidays in hot city streets with no beautiful river to swim in.

Kanga seemed a long way from that old Victorian school room and the rest of the summer was spent splashing about in the sea and dreaming of that beautiful river and sandy days in the sun.

Sheila Dixon

BOOK REVIEW: A GUIDE TO LIVING WITH WILDLIFE BY IAN TEMBY AND ORGANIC CONTROL OF HOUSEHOLD PESTS BY JACKIE FRENCH

Two books have been published recently which offer helpful advice on controlling pests. One concentrates on preventing damage from animals both native and exotic. The other presents recipes and strategies for killing, deterring or otherwise foiling household pests.

The material in Ian Temby's book is well organised and clearly presented, combining easy to follow directions and graphics with amusing line drawings. Each animal is listed in terms of problem, background and solution. Problems dealt with that are relevant to our area include birds flying into windows, possums in roofs and infestation by Bell Miners. Also included are lists of damage control materials, sources of supply and telephone contact numbers.

Jackie French offers organic alternatives to chemical treatments for pests such as silver-fish, clothes moths, rodents and termites. She describes each pest and the best means of preventing, repelling and controlling it. Regular vacuuming is recommended as the best method for controlling silver-fish. She suggests removing all books from bookcases once a year, vacuuming them and then dousing them liberally with lavender oil. When infestation is bad you may need to spray with pyrethrum as well.

Other tips for controlling silver-fish include encouraging spiders, "especially the giant huntsmen that don't build dust collection webs" (do we need a BICA field day on building huntsman nest boxes?). It is also worth noting that the common Daddy Long-legs is a voracious predator of silver-fish.

The section on rodents is also helpful. Included are descriptions and habits of the common rats and mice likely to be found in houses, a list of disease spread by rodents and characteristics for identification. The book also contains recipes for sprays, bait oils and repellents.

TEMBY, IAN. A guide to living with wildlife: how to prevent wildlife damage in Victoria.

Victoria. Department of Conservation and Environment, 1992

ISBN 0 7306 26474

FRENCH, JACKIE. Organic control of household pests. Melbourne. Aird Books. 1988

ISBN 0 947214 02 X

Both books are available from your local library.

Meg McCallum



BLOODY SILVERFISH...

SILVER-FISH CONTROL

CSIRO notes on the control of silver-fish are available from Meg and John McCallum. They include the following instructions for preparing and using baits.

SILVERFISH RECIPE

Plain wheat flour - 110 grams

Sugar- 110 grams

Salt - 10 grams

Sodium fluorosilicate* (finely powdered) - 25 grams

Gelatine - 10 grams

Water 1.5 litres

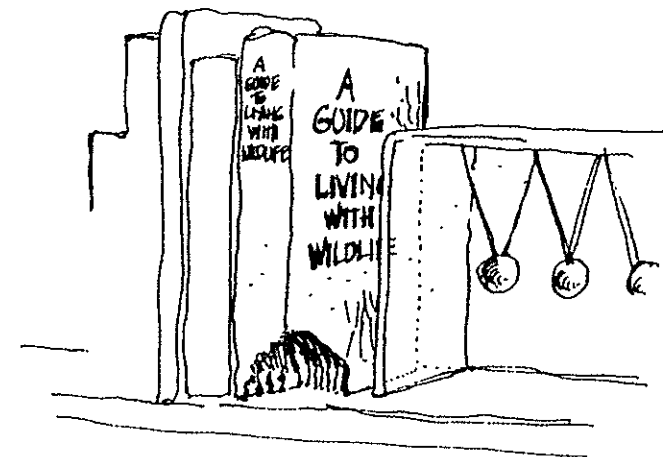
The quantities are sufficient to make enough baits for the average house.

To prepare the bait, first make the flour into a smooth paste with some of the water, then add the remainder, and heat to form a paste. Stir while

heating. The other ingredients are then added and thoroughly stirred in. The paste is then applied, while hot, to both sides of sheets of thin cardboard about half a metre square, and is allowed to dry.

Before applying the paste to the cardboard it should be marked into squares (about 150 mm across) in the centres of which should be written in pencil - "Silver-fish Bait". When cut into squares, the cards will then retain their identity throughout their life, which is as long as any of the paste film remains. It may not be necessary to replace the cards for several years. The cards should be distributed freely about the house- one, if possible, to each drawer, bookshelf or cupboard.

* Sodium fluorosilicate is available from Selby Anax for about \$20 for 500 grams. Who wants to buy some and repack smaller quantities?



A LITTLE NIGHT EXPERIENCE ☾

On Saturday, March 19 the Christmas Hills below the Catani Boulevard ridge had the look of goldrush days as fifty or so hardy souls carried their comfort swags by the glow of torchlight down the winding, steep path to the dam still known locally as Schoenheimer's.

Encouraged by the promise of a Night Experience, eager adults and excited children found the campfire roaring and staked out their spot. The night was clear, starry and only just verging towards a chill what better conditions for a spotlight walk with John McCallum, Felicity Faris, Dee Pelling or Meg McCallum? Unfortunately, not too many night animals or birds were spotted or heard, but everyone enjoyed the, mostly unusual for them, experience of actually wandering through our lovely bushland at night alert for the sounds of that bush. A huge contrast to what we mostly do on a Saturday night huddled in the cocoon of our homes . . .

After all the spotlighters returned it was time for a bit of radical thinking. Just lie down, close your eyes and be quiet for around ten minutes and really listen for the sounds of the bush, suggested Felicity. After a few false starts, quiet prevailed. Frogs were heard, the gurgling of the river not so far away, rustlings and a lot of black quietness it stilled my heart.

The highlight of the evening then was given to us (no, not Alan and Carol Bonny's pikelets with golden syrup you hedonists!). Firstly, the haunting and lyric sounds from Andrew who lives with Sarah on the Co-op in John and Glennie's home. He gave us an insight into the form of singing known as harmonic singing. To me it sounds impossible with one voice box to make those myriad sounds. But Andrew does. For those who have not heard it I can

only liken it to the sound of Gregorian chants . . . believe me it was absolute bliss around a dam on a quiet, clear, still Christmas Hills night!

And the magic continued . . . as the echoes of Andrew's voice died away new sounds were heard. Bewitching, mystic, celestial, eerie, haunting, floating, beautiful sounds from Sarah and Daniel's duet of Japanese flutes (the *shakuhachi*). For those like me who were perhaps feeling a little spaced out anyway by the unaccustomed peace, dark and quietness of the bushland this felt like a soaring journey to the stars. Beam me up Scotty!

Quietly, a new sound joined the flutes, even more haunting and absolutely right for the place we were the Australian bush a didgeridoo. Primal Australian sounds merged and swayed with the flutes, sometimes soaring beyond, other times content to be background and yet other times to become animal sounds. Thank you Bruce our new resident in Alan and Jenny's home in Gongflers we hope you and Lyn enjoy your time here in this lovely environment, I personally hope to hear you playing again soon!

After this blissful experience, it was time for the aforementioned Bonny pikelets rightly famed throughout the land, well at least on various bushland events! and billy tea around the fire. Now was the time for socialising, and aren't we all pretty good at that? It was also time for the exodus up the hill to begin, but there was reward for those of us who felt their night had not quite ended Andrew played us to a place for sleep with more haunting melodies from another time and space this time from his lute.

Ah, thanks folks, and as they said about that time in '63 Oh, What A Night!

Barb Whiter

WHOSE POO?

Often the only trace of mammal visitors is their faeces, however this does provide quite positive proof of identity. In an attempt to make the job (!) easier, John McCallum has compiled a collection of the faeces of smaller mammals that are likely to be found in our area. If you wish to identify your droppings you are

welcome to use the reference collection. Koala, Water Rat and Sugar Glider are not represented so verified samples of the faeces of these species would be welcome additions.

It is worth noting that the faeces of all indigenous and exotic mammals are a potential source of infection so care should be taken during and after the handling of such.



WHY?

Saturday morning at 7am woken up by the crunching of something moving through the ground litter just outside the bedroom window. Not a recognisable sound like the usual gang of choughs or a foraging magpie.

Cautiously raise our heads to peek out of the window to see, sitting on the ground about three metres from the bedroom window, a mature koala. Oblivious to us it waits while I get the camera for a shot through the window then venture outside for more photos. Apart from being a wonderful experience the

episode demonstrates why the ELZ is important. The "restrictions" that we are introduced to when we come to the ELZ may seem extreme and you may question why, but once you are here enjoying the wildlife and environment the "why" is answered daily by discoveries encountered like our vulnerable morning visitor.

The koala eventually got tired of the camera and grumbled its way up a nearby tree for the day. We've heard it grunting a few times at night since the day of the visit but not sighted again, maybe the koala is in your backyard by now.

Alan Bonny

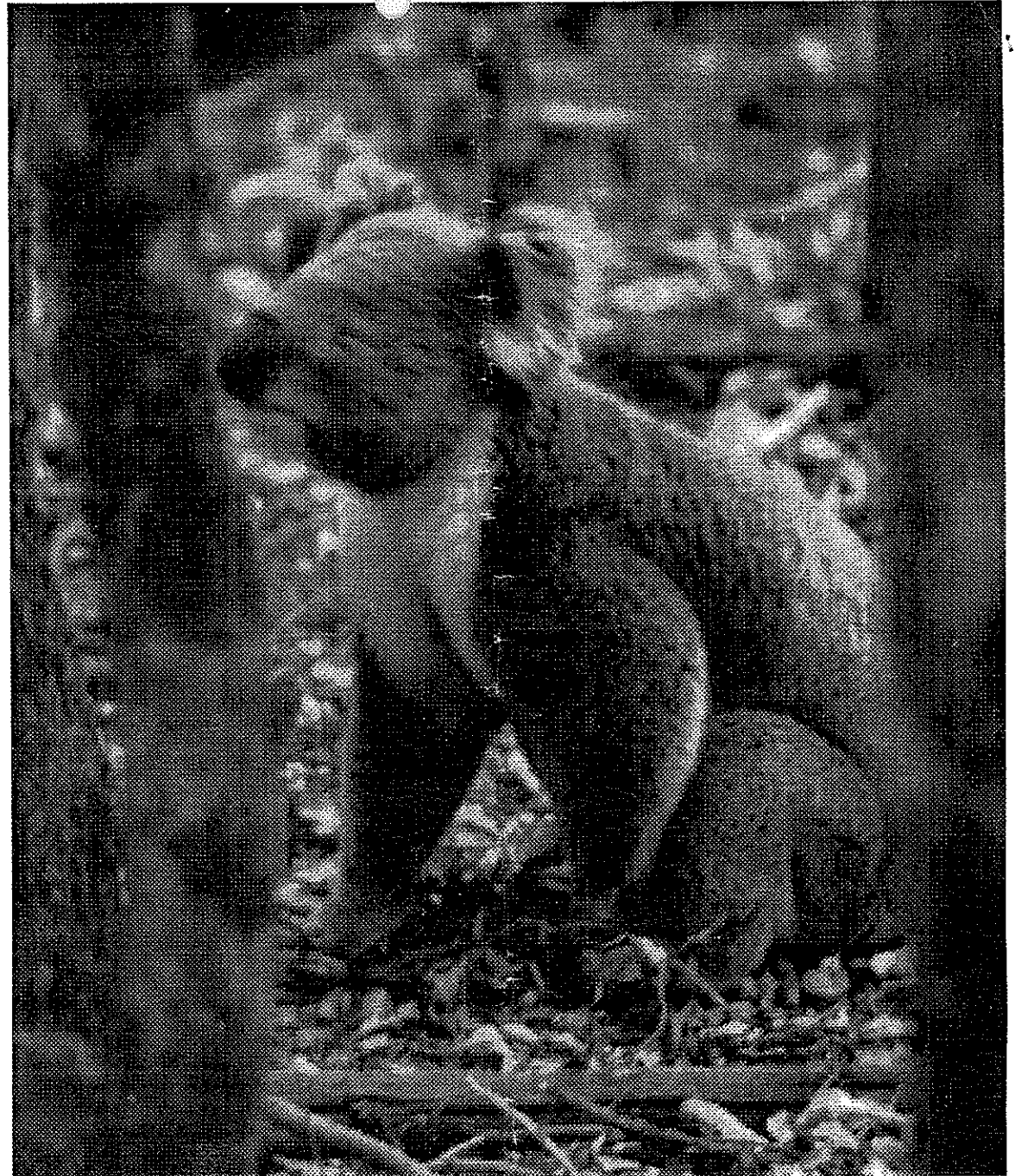
vale ROB MEADS

Rob Meads was a resident of Henley Rd for about twenty years and a well known figure in the area. Although he largely kept to himself in the Bend of Islands Rob was a strong supporter of BICA and a staunch defender of the Environmental Living Zone. Sadly, Rob died in a car accident in March this year. BICA extends its sympathy to his family and friends.

PROPOSED EVENT

Quadrat Follow-up and

Coffee. For those who were involved in constructing the quadrats and for anyone interested in having a look we are going to re-survey them on **23rd April at 2pm**. The purpose of the quadrats are to monitor flora growth within a protected area compared to a reference adjacent area. The quadrats are located at the Bonny and Faris property's 796 & 800 Henley Rd.



SPEED!

It's something that dictates our lives every minute of every day.

Governments call for efficiency and speed in the workplace; we take speed reading courses to race through books at school or newspaper articles at work; we demand speed from our home computers, the checkouts at supermarkets, the tellers at banks or their automatic counterparts in the wall outside the bank. Distances locally, interstate, and internationally are diminished drastically because the increased speed of transport reduces the time to cover the distance making everything seem closer. Our successes (or failures) can be judged by how quickly we do things.

Speed is your friend! But is it? What do we really gain by all this speed. A second here, five minutes there. What does it really cost?

In the E.L.Z. we are all, ostensibly, conservation minded. For years there have been petitions to council to reduce the local speed limit. Signs have been placed (and replaced) to alert drivers to the fact that they are not the only users of the road. Kangaroos bound along and cross at all hours, wombats waddle across their own "crossings". Rabbits. Oh, all right, they may be pests but they too use the road. Apart from the freakish actions of some animals leaping suicidally under the wheels of a car, reducing speed certainly reduces the incidence of "road pizzas".

Most people care about the animals and their safety. Some blithely ignore the

warnings and plough on regardless in the hope that Lady Luck will be with them and they'll be able to react quickly enough to avoid the unavoidable.

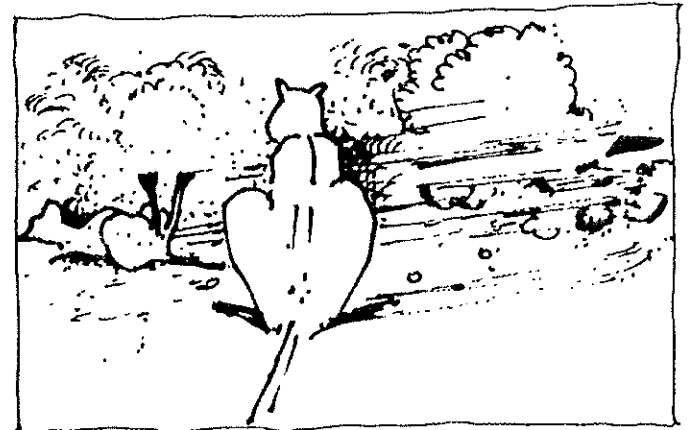
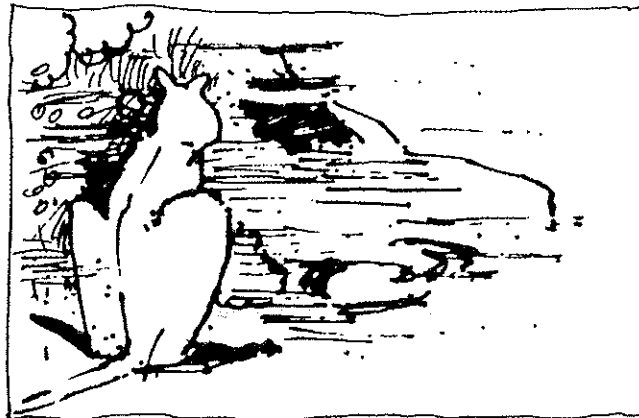
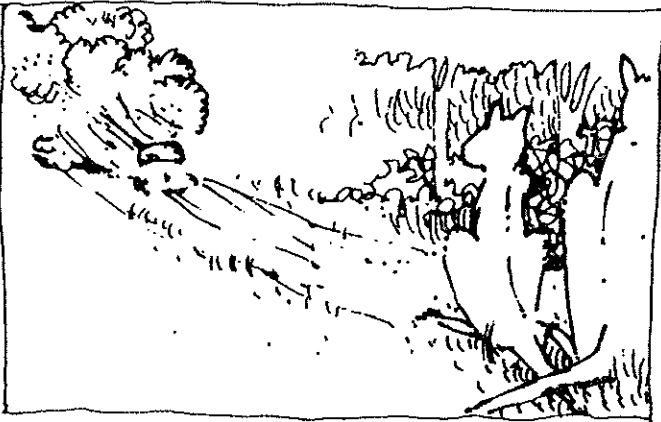
Over the past 12 months there appears to have been a reduction in the number of road deaths in the animal community, however I am prepared to stand corrected on that point. A re-introduction of the Road Toll sign near the bridge could assist there. In the same 12 months there has also been an increase in the number of cars using the local roads and so an increased risk in using the road. New residents in the area, existing residents, and the up-coming "P" plate generation - children of existing residents. Whilst considering the native fauna of the area and the effect a direct hit on them would have, there is one other native animal for whom I would like everyone to spare a thought.

It's usually nocturnal and travels in a small group. You don't see it every day but it's always in the area. It's instantly recognisable, and chances are - it knows you! It is, of course, a CFA Firefighter.

Whether you care for the animals or not. Whether you care for yourself and family or not. If you are speeding down the road and crash, someone you know and who cares for you will have to clean up the mess and get you out. When the siren goes off, I believe every volunteer secretly prays that it is not a car accident, I know I do.

So please, have a quick think about it.

Neill Kamminga



SHIRE AMALGAMATIONS

You will have noticed articles about various shires amalgamating with others. It has been tried before but this time it will probably happen although not in the immediate future. Our shire is looking at various options, as are others. The rumoured options about where the ELZ might end up are many and varied because a number of shires may formally propose a number of scenarios which include us. At this point, the BICA Planning Sub Committee is monitoring events and the minute we know of any formal proposals we'll assess what these could mean for the ELZ and produce information for you to consider.

The History of Amalgamation Proposals

1981

The Green Wedge Farmers Group (A community grouping of farmers and others in the north riding of Shire of Eltham) put a proposal for a new 'Rural Shire' to the then responsible body, the Local Government Board of Review. Their proposal included the Bend of Islands. This Board was later disbanded to make way for the new Local Government Commission and the proposal lapsed.

1983

The Rural Shire proposal re-emerged as was referred to the the Local Government Commission by the Green Wedge Farmers Steering Committee, seeking a recommendation to proceed. Again the proposal included the Bend of Islands. This proposal was caught up in new Government plans to restructure councils throughout Victoria.

1986

The State Government issued Discussion Papers and Options for restructuring of all councils/shires. BICA made a submission to the Local Government

Commission and lobbied to ensure adequate consideration of our zoning. BICA did not state a preference as to which Shire it should be located in, rather it concentrated on ensuring that wherever it resided, its zoning would not be compromised and it would lie within its area of ecological interest. This restructure program was dropped after virtual territorial warfare erupted across the state.

1992

A new Rural Shire proposed, steered by north riding Eltham Councillors and residents previously part of the Green Wedge Farmers Committee. The catalyst this time, a move by some Eltham councillors to hive off parts of Eltham Shire to Diamond Valley. A series of community meetings occurred to sound the water. Essentially the proposal involved the North and possibly central ridings of Eltham, combined with parts of Warrandyte and the ELZ with Hurstbridge as the Town Centre. BICA prepared an Issues Paper related to this proposal. Essentially many of the issues remain the same today although the changes in planning make the matter far more complex.

1993

New Government Planning and Development Minister announced sweeping changes to the planning system in Victoria including amalgamations of municipalities and shires. The Minister has compulsorily required some city and regional centre councils to amalgamate. Some are now in the process of doing this, others are challenging the requirement. Victoria has been divided into three rings, inner, outer suburban and rural. Eltham is in the outer ring and Healesville in the rural ring. The Minister has encouraged all councils to produce amalgamation proposals for consideration by the Local Government Board.

Amalgamations will be voluntary. Because local government funding arrangements are part of the picture, most councils are currently exploring amalgamation options.

BICA'S RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS PROPOSALS

Throughout the previous moves for amalgamation, the BICA has maintained that the following would need to be ensured whichever Shire the ELZ is located in:

- *Must remain within the area of responsibility of the Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority*
- *Automatic retention of the ELZ under any new Planning Scheme (Note this is now complicated by the new moves in the planning system regarding introduction of new zones statewide)*
- *Must remain within the zone's priority area of 'ecological community of interest', that is, those areas of relatively intact native bushland which adjoin the ELZ, which relate to the Yarra River, Watsons Creek and which offer the opportunity for native vegetation corridors to the north. (A map indicating our previous 'area of interest' was prepared in 1986).*
- *Must remain within its priority area of social community of interest, namely Christmas Hills.*
- *Must remain with its area of planning community of interest. That is, must continue to have 'standing' (as ratepayers and voters) in the areas in which it most wishes to influence events from a conservation viewpoint.*

BATS

Although most of us are probably aware that we have several species of bats in the ELZ, it is unlikely that many of us know a great deal about them. In fact, one of the most striking thing about these fascinating creatures is how little is known about them. At the November BICA Annual General Meeting we were privileged to have Lindy Lumsden of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, a biologist specialising in bats, clear up the mystery a bit.

First to dispel those evil old myths which would have us believe that bats are blood-sucking monsters or vampires in disguise, who spend their evenings helping witches and the like to perform satanic rituals and harass innocent young heroes/heroines. In fact bats, at least our comparatively tame varieties, display none of these characteristics (except of course that they are nocturnal). Most feed on small insects, and are therefore classed as insectivorous, others feed on either blossoms or fruit and a small percentage are carnivorous and feed on small birds or sometimes other bats. As far as I know none of them have any religious allegiances.

There are two more misapprehensions which lead people to come to the wrong conclusions about bats. The first is that they skulk around in caves during the day. This is not entirely false but, as Ms Lumsden informed us, of the twenty species of [insectivorous] bats in Victoria only two use caves for roosting. The others use trees, hollows, peeling bark or any small niche they may discover.

The second myth is the saying 'as blind as a bat'. Bats are not in fact blind although different species have varying visual ability. Most bats use their sight

to discern large objects such as trees but would use their echo location (sonar) if they wanted, for example, to negotiate their way through the smaller branches of the tree without slowing down. Therefore bats use a combination of sight and echo location but the latter, being so much more accurate, is the primary form of location used. The sound for the echo location is produced in the bat's larynx and put out through the nose in the Horseshoe species and the mouth in most others. The reflected sound is then received back through the ears. From this they can gather information about distance, speed, direction, size, type and tastiness of their prey.

Of the Australian species of bats the insectivorous ones are by far the most diverse. Ms Lumsden told us that there were approximately seventy species of insectivorous bats in Australia and only eight of the better known fruit bat, who mainly reside in the northern states. Insectivorous bats are in general much smaller than fruit bats and have quite a different appearance. While the fruit bat's face is not dissimilar to a fox or small cute mammal, with large eyes, the insectivorous bats often have intricate and strange faces which are designed to enable their echo location to work most effectively. They have small eyes as they rely on their echo location more and therefore don't need their sight much.

One species of insectivorous bat which has recently been studied, and is one of Victoria's cave-dwelling species, is the Common Bent-Wing Bat. It got its name because the tips of their wings fold back. They are very small, weighing an average of 13 grams, and are a fast-flying species which can cover large distances. Female Bent-Wing bats fly to large maternity caves in the last days of gestation while

the males stay behind. In Victoria there are only two such caves which house up to 60,000 pregnant and lactating bats.

Some of these tiny bats, which have been tagged, have been found to fly 200km overnight from the maternity cave back home. Because they are so fussy about where they will give birth these sites are very important and the species becomes very vulnerable at breeding time. The reason for their fussiness is that they need very high temperatures and humidity for the speedy growth of their young and these caves have lots of domes and shapes conducive to maintaining constant high temperatures for the bats.

The other Victorian cave dwelling species is the Eastern Horseshoe Bat but they have a different distribution to the Bent Wing bats who are very concentrated. The Horseshoe bat's distribution is much wider than that of the Bent-Wing because they have actually been aided by European settlement. This species has taken to roosting in mine shafts in areas where there are no natural occurring caves. The Horseshoe bat's maternity caves house approximately 5,000 bats, both male and female, at a time. Despite being able to extend its range and having more maternity caves than the Bent-Wing, the Eastern Horseshoe Bat is on the threatened species list because of its vulnerable roosting habits so this has been an important step for the species.

Ms Lumsden also told us that her current research involved tree roosting bats in farmland areas which have been fully or partially cleared. This, she says, led her to discover that bats have fared far better than many other species, and than she had expected, in farmland areas. By rigging a harmless bat-trap of fishing wire mesh and a canvas bag she can catch

and tag or fit a miniature radio transmitter to the bats to find out more about their roosting habits and numbers. She told us that she had discovered that, in cleared areas, it is important for the bats that there are a few trees left standing. By setting these traps in different areas she is obtaining new information, such as mentioned above, which is important for understanding these mammals which still remain largely a mystery to us and can ensure their survival.

Of the farmland species the Lesser Long-Eared Bat has been of particular interest to Ms Lumsden. Despite being a very common species, little is known about them and she has found that dead trees are very important for them because 90% of this species roosts in them whether they are in a clump within cleared land, by themselves or are surrounded by bush. This species has so far been surprisingly untouched by farming as long as some, even if few, trees remain. She has also discovered that the Lesser Long-Eared Bat's roosts are usually less than two metres from the ground and often very exposed, some roosting in cracked fenceposts and even bolt holes. They generally stay faithful to their area but to avoid predators they pick a different tree, within the site, every night. Despite many bats prospering in farmland areas, some bats will only roost in dense forest and have often found themselves displaced and have had to limit their range to fewer areas.

Janine Taylor

LOCAL FLORA PROPAGATION GROUP

This is a general news flash on what has occurred so far and what the next step is.

Last November I applied on behalf of BICA for a Project Grant from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources requesting \$970. The DCNR looked at the project with some interest and expect to give us an answer at about the time this article appears.

The main objectives of the project are to:

1. Establish a seed bank of our local indigenous species.
2. Establish an on-going stock of plants in a nursery, initially with about two thousand plants.
3. To provide indigenous plant stock for regeneration of damaged areas including roadsides and for the use of BICA members generally (especially to help new residents move in).

Now the seed collection went well. We had a seed collection demo day before Christmas. We looked at what the burn-off practice on the Co-op was like, the plant diversity and population numbers, what was seeding and compared this to a sample line across the "Storm Eagle" property, Pierce's and McCallum's. We also looked at the Melbourne Water block at the end of Ironbark Rd.

Seed collecting is very much ecosystem dependent. This means seeds from high north facing land that is usually drier and less fertile have genetic specialization for that kind of environment. The same is true for gully environments and along the river.

The genetic material changes as we move kilometre, so much so that genetic stock at Pound Ben is already different. The same species up river or down river may not be suitable. We experience different flowering times, problems of hybridization, risks of sterilization and so on. This has now become a problem for remnant forests in a landscape predominantly developed for farming and residential use.

Very importantly the seed collection documentation helps keep all of this under control. All who have collected seeds please pass on the "BICA PROPAGATION COLLECTION RECORD" sheet to Edward Car so that we know what is where.

We now have sufficient seed stock to proceed with the project. The next step is planting into 2" forestry tubes. We plan to pot in April. A working day is planned on Sunday, April 9th at 2.00 pm

I encourage all residents to take interest in the project. If you are unable to help with the potting and later planting in order to prepare your plant supply needs for 1994, please talk to me.

Edward Car
Telephone: 712 0533

BICA WINE RAFFLE

Winners of the last raffle drawn at the November 1993 Annual General Meeting were...

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| 1. John O Sullivan | Orange E87 |
| 2. Robyn Duff | Orange E 90 |
| 3. Glen Jameson | Blue B44 |

Another wine raffle is going to be held soon. Tickets will be circulated around the end of April. Please support this again; it is about the only source of income that BICA has except subscriptions.

SUMMER DAYS!

Remember those hot summer days in early February this year? You reckon it was bad...well let me tell you.....well when I was a kid up here it was really hot. Don't you love people telling you that? Actually I suppose it didn't help when all we had to keep the food cool were the a Coolgardie safes and a lot of luck.

All meat being served up that day was surreptitiously sniffed at by our mothers, hoping that we weren't looking and then wiped over with vinegar. Unless the milk was fresh from Honey the cow's boobs then that was pretty dubious too. But there was always the good old corned beef and pumped leg of mutton that lasted a bit longer. But boy, oh boy, did we miss the cold lemonade and icecream.

Grandma used to make a concoction of fruit saline and raspberry vinegar which at least fizzed I suppose. It just wasn't the same though.

We were up here for five weeks of the school holidays and once the hysteria of Christmas was over then we could settle down to the serious business of summer time. The beach at Claire's was the spot and we practically lived down there. There was much more sand then and at one end was a bush hut. It had a large table and benches all round for lunches and afternoon tea. The mothers used to struggle down in the heat at lunch time to

bring down our sustenance but I always get the impression that the more we ate the skinnier we got. Not like today. And as for skin cancer...what was that? It was just a matter of getting that first big sunburn and suffering for a few days then on the freckles and tans. I think there was a smelly concoction of coconut oil and vinegar which was merely an aid to the general roasting.

We all thirteen of us learned to swim up here. We had an elder cousin who shall be nameless who, as a swimming coach, used to just chuck us in the river. Like puppies we struggled and splashed about until we actually floated after a fashion. I must say that it worked after a while but I remember a few near misses.

Our fathers were generally working in the city during the week and at weekends they puttered up in the old De Sotos and Essexes. My Dad was very popular because he used to bring up a billy of icecream from the Blue Gum Milk Bar in Eltham. This was a weeping mess by the time he got here but it was the taste we were missing. On the front seat of the car there would be a block of ice wrapped up in newspaper for the old ice chest we had acquired. A truly historic occasion though was when he arrived once with a whole box of assorted halfpenny lollies You know the sort you generally stared at in

(Continued on page 6)

