CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

NOVEMBER 1989 #151

White Throated Tree-creepers

Another pair of White Throated Tree-creepers has cho sen to nest in one of our nest-logs, this one is just across from our back door.

We have observed this pair "brushing" the log, and the adjacent branches, just as we reported seeing in September 1987. The bird quite plainly held something "whispy" in its beak. What it was could not be positively identified.

Have others made the same observations and formed any theories as to why the birds do this? Clearly it is not just a one-off phenomenon.

Wyn Palmer.

Sandon Outing with Ballarat

There is nothing like going to an area with someone who knows it to find how many "special" places are still to be found.

After meeting Ballarat F.N.C. and the rest of our own roup at the Black Duck we were taken to a lignum swamp not far from Campbelltown. The objects of the greatest interest were some Lapwing chicks running around with their parents, who kept up their warning call the whole time we were there, so there was no chance to keep our presence quiet! Also seen there was a flock of White-fronted Chats.

Next stop was the roadside about 3km on the Castlemaine side of the Black Duck. There were lots of flowers there, and the first Brachychomes that were seen. We had lunch where the cars were parked - there were lots of waves from the passers by! - and then crossed over to the bush on the other side for a walk into the area. The first Sun-orchids were seen there, as well as a large patch of Greencomb Spider orchids and numerous, brightly coloured Pink-fingers. At the end of this walk we found numerous Long-leaf bitter-

pea just coming into flower, and one seedling Coastal Ti-tree growing at the base of a south-facing cutting. It will be interesting to see if it survives, and if it really is a Coastal Ti-tree.

Next stop is usually a good bird spot, but I think they must have taken one look at our numbers and taken fright, although there were plenty of calls heard, and quite a number seen. Highlight for me at that place were the large numbers of young Mat Bush-pea.

The afternoon tea stop was labelled a Bush Garden on the itinerary, and that was a good description. There were masses of Pinkbells, and lots of other flowers as well. It was a most pleasant place to finish our day.

Rita Mills

BIRD WATCHING AT WYPERFIELD

DIMBOOLA - KIATA

A flock of Fairy Martins was at work at the highway bridge over the Wimmera River. Other birds seen at this spot were Dusky Woodswallows, White-browed Babblers, and a Variegated Wren was seen for the first time. The male Variegated Wren is rather like our blue wren, except for chestnut shoulders. It seemed to be more timid than our wren and more inclined to hide inside shrubs. Clamorous Reed Warblers were very clamorous in the reeds along the river.

Kiata proved to be rather inhospitable, with cold winds and rain. The Superb Blue Wrens were common here. One male was particularly striking, with a bright white band across its shoulders. The first Chestnut-rumped Thornbill and Mallee Ringneck Parrots were seen at Kiata.

HORSESHOE BEND

Crested Pigeons were seen many times during the trip. Peaceful Doves were much less common, but several were seen feeding along the track along the river. The Desert Banksia is the most common shrub over some of the sandy bushland near Dimboola, but flowering for the year was over, and so nectar was not being supplied for honey-eaters. In some of the clay depressions, giant bottlebrush plants can be found. Some were three or four metres high, and perhaps seven or eight metres across. Notable birds seen in this locality were a White-backed Woodswallow, Varied Triller and Hooded Robin.

New Holland Honeyeaters were the most conspicuous of the honeyeaters (sometimes being called 'Wimmera Sparrows'), but White-plumed Honeyeaters were also quite common. Further into the Little Desert Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters were seen several times. They are often obliging, with the convenient habit of resting on the tallest shrub in the vicinity. Grey Butcherbirds were also seen several times.

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In the scrub near Dimboola, trees are often not very plentiful. In one Black Box, a flock of Sittellas were feeding. They had conspicuous black heads, and a few years ago would have been called Black-headed Sittellas. Now they are included with the local sittellas and are called Varied Sittellas.

WAIL

In the trees of the park, Musk and Purple-crowned Lorikeets were feeding. Red-rumped Parrots were common - sometimes a flock of about a dozen could be seen feeding. At one stage, some were noticed swooping at a Red Gum, and closer inspection showed the target was a Tawny Frogmouth. It was wonderfully camouflaged, and only the feathers about the face gave it away.

Along the Dimboola - Wail road, a flock of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes was noticed. They were feeding on a recently ploughed paddock, and flying to the trees along the edge of the road. Twenty-five were counted on the ground. Some of the cuckoo-shrikes were out of sight over the hill, and some were in the trees, so the total number must have been somewhat greater than this. Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters were found in this vicinity, as well as White-winged Trillers, a Fan Tailed Cuckoo and A Horsefield's Bronze-cuckoo. This latter cuckoo is smaller than the Fan-tailed Cuckoo. and has incomplete bars across its chest.

A Boobook Owl was another notable find, seen inside one of the tree hollows.

Further into the forest, a pair of Southern scrub-robins were watched for several minutes. We stood quietly, and they approached to within a couple of metres. Eastern Shrike-tits and Rufous Whistlers were also found nearby.

At Wail, Little Wattlebirds and Red Wattlebirds were feeding. The former is like the Red Wattlebird, but is darker beneath, and has an cinnamon wing patch that can be seen when in flight. Other birds seen were Grey Butcher-birds, Rainbow Birds, Red-capped Wrens, and a Mistletoe Bird.

WYPERFIELD.

At morning tea, on arrival, White-rumped Miners were seen in a nearby red-gum. Shortly afterwards, Mallee Ringnecks were seen - the first of many sightings while at Wyperfield. This was my first visit to Wyperfield, and I had not expected that so much of the park would be taken up by Black Box woodland. Regent Parrots were fairly common in this locality. These are very striking parrots - most of the body is yellow except for a conspicuous reddish wing patch. Other parrots to be seen included Mulga Parrots and a Pink Cockatoo. A Shining Bronze-cuckoo was seen in a Black Box - it is like a Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo except that the bars on the breast are continuous. Cont. P.7

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In the scrublands, Splendid Wrens were seen several times. These differ from our blue wrens in that the male has much more, and much brighter, blue. The female differs from our blue wren in that she has a pale blue tail, ad pink feathers about the eye. Other birds seen in the scrub areas were Chestnut-tailed Hylacola, Brown Headed Honeyeaters, Tawny Crowned Honeyeaters, Red-capped Robins, Black-eared Cuckoo and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters.

FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING

YOUR OUTBACK TOUR. Would you like to go on your outback tour (in your own vehicle), but need suitable company?. Geelong F.N.C. is making a register of such people.

THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS. Sec of W.V.F.N.C.A. has written, thanking our Club for the recent campout at Castlemaine. The next campout will be at Geelong on the March long weekend, and the September campout will be at Wyperfield.

A NATURALISTS EMBLEM. Suggestions include the Grass Tree (easily recognised, found in all states (in one variety or another), but absent from many sections of Australia) and the Echidna (occurs across Aiustralia, but already used by some organisations). What do you think?

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HYBRID GREVILLEA ON FRYERS RIDGE. During the excursion with Bendigo F.N.C. to see the Elphinstone Grevillea, a plant was found that was thought to be a hybrid between G. obtecta (the Fryerstown Grevillea) and G. alpina (our common local grevillea). The habit was prostrate, like that of the Fryerstown Grevillea. However the leaves were narrow, like G. alpina, and only a few were toothed. The flowers resembled G. alpina also.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Fri 10 Nov. HEAD HUNTERS. ORANG-OUTANGS & PITCHER PLANTS with Gretna Weste. High School at 8 pm.

Sat 11 Nov. MANDURANG FOREST. Leave S.E.C. Mostyn St at 1.30 sharp. Take your tea if desired.

Thur 23 Nov. BUSINESS MEETING. 7.30 pm at 38 Campbell St.

Sun 26 Nov. GOWER - Mt ALEXANDER. Bird Observer Club outing with Maggie Oliver. Meet Gower School

Sat 2 Dec. GLENLUCE - BREAKFAST AT DAWN. to see the early Birds. Contact M. Oliver for details.

Fri 8 Dec. MEMBERS AND VISITORS NIGHT. Supper.

Thurs 25 Jan. Business meeting

Fri 9 Feb. GUNBARREL HIGHWAY with Nicolette Hooper. This is the annual meeting.

Sat 10 - Mon 12 Mar. GEELONG/OCEAN GROVE CAMPOUT

Wed 14 Mar. READING THE LAND BY MAJOR MITCHELL'S PARTY. Bendigo F.N.C. meeting, Dept Ag at Epsom. 7.30 pm.

Sun 18 Mar. MOUNTAIN PEPPER on Mt Alexander. Excursion with Bendigo F.N.C. to look for Mountain Pepper.

Mon 17 Sep. DARGILE FOREST. Excursion with Bird Observers Club - weekday excursion.

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No meetings during January.

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Castlemaine F.N.C. Inc. P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450
Committee: George Broadway (Pres), Barbara Maund (Sec), Maggie Oliver (VP), Rita Mills (Newsletter), Kaye Turner (Prog Sec), Ern Perkins (Treas), Margaret Dunne, Elma Kelly, Ian Higgins, Lesley Perkins.

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Subscriptions for 1989.
Single: $5 Family: $8 Pensioner/student: $3
Supporting: $12
Newsletter posted: membership subscription plus $5

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Supper Roster:
Nov 10: B Maund,E Duffin,M Downie Dec 8 P Shaw,E Hall