

Castlemaine Naturalist

March 2018

Vol. 43.2 #462

Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



A Great Cormorant contemplates the green algae on
Lake Joanna – photo by Noel Young 29/1/18

February excursion to Mount Macedon

Judy Hopley

A small group of members enjoyed a trip to Mount Macedon on Saturday 10 February. After driving to Days Picnic ground we had lunch and then commenced a circuit walk that included Sanatorium Lake and the Sanatorium Picnic area. The cooler temperature and light showers were a welcome relief from the heat at Castlemaine.

Various indigenous plants were sighted including Austral Bugle (*Ajuga australis*); Bidgee-widgee (*Acaena novae-zelandiae*); Scrub Nettle (*Urtica incisa*) host to the Australian Admiral butterfly; Native Fireweed Groundsel (*Senecio linearifolius*); Tasman Flax-lily (*Dianella tasmanica*) and Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*). Manna Gums (*E. viminalis*), unfortunately no koalas, and Mountain Ash (*E. regnans*) were plentiful.

As we neared the lake we observed that many Holly Trees (*Ilex aquifolium*) have spread through the forest. Coming across a stand of Redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) Richard quipped that there was no need to visit California to see such trees! At the Sanatorium picnic ground we were impressed by a number of beautiful well established trees including a magnificent Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica 'Atropurpurea'*), a Linden (*Tilia cordata*), and an Irish Strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*).

These trees were obviously popular when the lake and picnic ground were established towards the end of the 19th century. They provide shade and colour against the backdrop of the lovely eucalypt forest. The man-made lake was built to provide water for a proposed sanatorium for tuberculosis patients and is famous for its intense reflections when the conditions are right.

Many ferns, including tree ferns, mosses, lichens and fungi were observed. The cooler climate and wetter conditions of the Macedon area provide a variety of flora that appears quite lush compared to the type of vegetation that we are used to seeing in our local environment.

Birds observed or heard included White-browed Scrub Wrens; Crimson Rosellas; a White-throated Treecreeper and a Bronzewing Pigeon. There was evidence of wombats and one wombat hole was seen.

Thanks to Richard Piesse and George Broadway for organising the excursion. George and Phee joined us for lunch then drove to meet up with the group at Sanatorium Lake and at the big exotic trees at the picnic ground.

Thanks also to Dianne Thomson and Phee Broadway for plant identification and to Geraldine Harris for photos and the list of birds that were observed.



Sanatorium Lake, Mt. Macedon

[Photos by Geraldine Harris]

Next page:

Tasman Flax-lily (*Dianella tasmanica*);
Linden tree and Irish Strawberry tree;
Eucalyptus viminalis, and a Wombat hole.



Notes and Specimens 1940

George Broadway

Specimens sent to Mr Crosbie Morrison of "Wildlife" magazine identified in the March 1948 issue. Can we find the same specimens today? Be on the lookout for interesting specimens. Here are the ones sent in March 1948, i.e, 70 years ago.

Kurrajong NSW: A freak head of maize where male and female flowers occur on the same head instead of separately.

Yarraville: Umbrella Sedge *Cyperus vegetus*. Introduced from S. Africa as an ornamental in gardens but has escaped and become a troublesome weed.

Bankstown NSW: Chrysalis of the Common Australian Crow Butterfly, rather plentiful this year. (1948) The caterpillars feed on Oleanders and a number of other plants but we have not heard of them attacking ferns.

Cooranbong NSW: Specimen escaped in transit but from the condition of the box it was probably a Tree Cricket *Paragryllacris*, with jaws which could easily cut through cardboard. (already mentioned previously)

Geelong: Botany Bay Diamond Beetle, one of the larger weevils, *Chrysalophus spectabilis*, which attacks many kinds of Acacia. The larvae burrow into the roots and kill the tree. We have not heard of them attacking pine trees although other weevils do.

Bendigo: Convolvulus Hawk Moth. Caterpillars feed on Convolvulus and Bindweed. (Previously mentioned) Also Steels Creek, seen sipping nectar. Also Seymour.

Stawell: Largest of the Victorian Praying Mantis Family.

Geelong: Horned Plant Bug which sucks the sap of a number of plants. Only the adults have wings.

Cheltenham: Large Dragon Fly.

Ringwood: *Lissoplimpa*. An ichneumon wasp which injects its eggs into caterpillars, which are then eaten alive.

Daylesford: Small, ground-dwelling solitary native bee. Does not produce honey.

Tallangatta: Spotted Flower Chafer, a destructive beetle in the garden. Usually only seen in summer.

Stawell: Gum Emperor caterpillar found on a lawn. Normally found on a Eucalypt or a Pepper tree. Also Cabbage Tree.

Melbourne: Steely blue Leafhopper, *Cicadella*, related to the much larger cicadas.

Batlow NSW: Long-legged water bug *Ranatra*, known commonly as the "Pond measurer" or "Pond Strider". Is able to fly and swim. The sucking beak is used to prey on other pond creatures and the front pair of legs is modified for seizing prey rather like a praying mantis.

Alphington: Not an anopheles mosquito but *Aedes aegypti*, the one that carries Dengue Fever.

Pomonal: Water Scorpion *Nepa*, not a scorpion but a type of bug. With its stout front legs and strong beak it feeds on tadpoles and other pond creatures. A pair of neatly folded wings enables it to fly from pond to pond, usually by night. The long "tail" is not a sting but a breathing tube.

Thornbury: small grey mantis. There are many kinds of mantis in Australia ranging from specimens up to 15 cm down to little ones measuring only a fraction of a cm. They all find prey appropriate to their size.

Clarinda: Small bird with white spots on black wings, nesting in a tunnel in the ground: Spotted Pardalote.

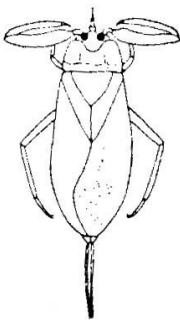
Balaclava: Specimen was so "high" when received it was impossible to do anything with it. It was a Common Sea Dragon, not to be confused with the Leafy Sea Dragon or Sea Horse, *Phyllopterus foliates*.

Moondarra: Gordius Worm or "Living Horsehair". During part of its life parasitic in certain insects and spiders.

Warrnambool: There are several varieties of small grass snake of the pattern you describe, but in this case there is no doubt that it is the young of the Brown Snake. The most reliable indication is the speckling like measles under the front third of the body. There is also a legless lizard which mimics this juvenile snake perfectly except for the presence of ear openings and the absence of spots on the underside.

Tinamba: The so-called "Long-tailed Spider" *Arachnura higginsii*. The extension of the hinder end is a prolongation of the abdomen and not a true tail. There is no sting in the tail. Illustrated previously.

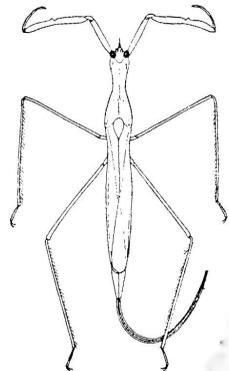
Richmond: An Orb-web Spider, *Epeira diademata*, sometimes called "Queen of the Night" (I don't know if there has been a name change but my spider books refer to the Garden Orb-weaver as *Eriophora transmarina*. Or *biapicata*.)



Ranatra. Pond Measurer



Garden Orb Weaver



Nepa. Water Scorpion

The Birds of Sutton Grange

Nigel Harland

Writing such a column as this every month sharpens your eyes to the birdlife on your property and I could recommend it to everyone.

- Red Wattlebird
- Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
- New Holland Honeyeater
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
- Long-billed Corella
- Crimson Rosella
- Red-rumped Parrot
- Spotted Pardalote
- Tree Martin
- Welcome Swallow
- Galah
- White-browed Scrubwren
- Superb Fairy-wren ----->
- Australian Raven
- Wedge-tailed Eagle
- Grey Shrike-thrush
- Willie Wagtail
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater ----->
- Red-browed Finch
- Common Bronzewing
- Eastern Rosella
- Musk Lorikeet
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
- Eastern Yellow Robin
- White-throated Treecreeper
- Fuscous Honeyeater
- Australian Magpie
- Common Blackbird
- White-naped Honeyeater
- Spotted Turtle-dove
- White-winged Chough
- Whistling Kite



The only unwelcome bird was the Spotted Turtle-dove, which appeared briefly before disappearing. It was the first time I had seen one on the property.

Observations of note

Euan Moore reported a number of sightings of **White-throated Needle-tails** since late January. Your editor has also observed them, once in late January during the passing of a stormy front, and on February 10th swooping to treetop level in Happy Valley.

Euan also reported a **Square-tailed Kite** on the east side of town.

Changed membership fees for 2018

The following motion was passed by members at the first General meeting in 2018, on Friday 11th February.

That the full membership fees be raised to \$35 (Single) and \$50 (Family) , and that the concession fees remain unchanged at \$25 (single) and \$30 (Family).

Annual General Meeting 2018

The 2018 AGM will be held at 7.30 pm this Friday 9th March, and will be followed by the General Meeting, at which the speaker will be Carol Hall.

The AGM Agenda will include reports from the President and Treasurer, and elections for the 2018 Committee. Members are strongly encouraged to consider standing for the committee. At least one of our committee members is not standing for re-election. Nomination forms were distributed with the February newsletter, and are available from the Secretary.

**Our speaker this month will be
Carol Hall**

"Why is South-Western Australia's ecology so special ?"

- Selected topics from a wildflower tour in spring 2016.

"I have taken as the basis for the talk the huge areas of granite in the south-west, their geomorphology and the resulting number of micro-habitats both in the arid interior and along the wetter south coast."

Bird Quiz

The bird featured last month was the Grey Fantail. It is a very common bird in our district and a member of the very extensive Fantail family. It can often be found close to habitation and makes either a single "cheek" call or puts them together if agitated.

The bird for next month is shown right.



Nigel Harland

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists

Coming events

Fri March 9 meeting: AGM, speaker CAROL HALL – 'Why is south west Australia's ecology so special?'

Sat March 10 field trip: TBA

Fri April 13 meeting: speaker DAVID HOLLANDS

Fri May 11 meeting: speaker ZOE THOMPSON – native grasslands

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website (Web master: Chris Timewell) - <http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/>

Subscriptions for 2018

Ordinary membership: Single \$35, Family \$50

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2017 Committee

President:	George Broadway	5472 2513
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