

o the day after Australia was first founded as a nation. Leaving Point Nepean on 27th, they trudged on for four days before passing the flat swampy Carrum terrain and pushing on towards the slightly hilly country.

Crossing a stream, which the natives referred to as "Moodie Yallock", the men who formed the party became the first Europeans to set foot on that particular part of the land which lays almost directly opposite the centreway between the heads at the opening to the bay. Having charted the stream, the leader of the expedition and acting Surveyor General of New South Wales, Charles Grimes, packed his mapping gear once more. The party then moved on to where the long stretch of flat country, edged most of the way by the nine-mile beach, gave way to steady rises and a red bluff. The explorers climbed through the forest towards the top of the hill which rose eastwards to an above-sea-level height of one hundred feet.

From here the country, still thickly wooded, again flattened out and was in parts swampy. The flat stretch extended for some twenty miles across the native "Moorabbin" with scarcely an appreciable rise, until it met rather abruptly, the distant blue hills. As had been the case since the beginning of the journey, the bush was dominated by, about equally, Red-gum and She-oak trees. On the higher levels where the soil was somewhat greyish, the undergrowth was mainly of Honeysuckle and Wild Currant, but on the lower and swampy stretches it consisted of bracken and spear grass. The bird and animal life on the other hand was more consistent with the same varied species in each case appearing regularly all the way from Point Nepean.

It was a noisy forest, the parakeet, cockatoo, rosella and mag-pie made it so, but the nightmarish sound mixture made by these birds was totally ignored by the pee-wee, bell-bird, thrush, wren, robin and others of the small bird variety, whose song from the lower branches of the trees was of a more musical nature. The humorous kookaburra was the friend of all other birds despite his tendency to burst out laughing without the lightest sign of-or need for provocation. He was "watchman" over the small birds' greatest enemy. Perched high on a leafy gum-tree the kookaburra watched with his keen eyesight for the slightest movement in the undergrowth, which might betray the sly "copperhead", "diamond", "brown" or "black" snake in the sandy soil and bracken below him.

At the first sign of a rustle in the spear grass he would dive on to the reptile, snap it in his powerful beak and rise with the wriggling striking serpent above the highest tree to

drop it hard onto solid rock, breaking its back. The kookaburra would then go on repeating this punishment until life for the snake was extinct. He would settle down and, pickingly, enjoy its meat in a meal until his appetite had been satisfied, whence he would rise again to the tree-top to think over the moment with peels of exuberant laughter. Finally, tired of the whole thing, his beak would drop onto a feathery breast and the jovial bird would drift into a brief sleep.

Flying around in formation above the sleeping "kooka" might be a flock of wild game-birds of the fowl, duck or turkey varieties or an occasional crow or a lone hawk. The explorers found the animal, bird and vegetable life in the faraway woodlands not altogether different to that of French's Forest on Sydney Harbour. Of the animals, there was the emu, with his small fidgetting head, and the kangaroo, whose head moved more searchingly and more calculatively. The possum, with his clown-like act, proving that the tail was more versatile than other animals knew it to be, proceeded to swing by it. Then becoming bored with his own performance he went to sleep in his idiotic position.

The wild cat, social outcast of the bushlands, was also to be found, clawing and hissing at some wild dog belonging to a wandering aborigine, or cruelly and silently pouncing on an unsuspecting wren, before carrying it off between savage jaws to separate flesh from feathers with greedy haste and devour. All the while, from the height of a gum-tree a mother koala with her baby, clinging fearfully, perched above the round part of her back, could watch the tragic balance of nature being evened out beneath her very eyes, thankful for the protectiveness of leafy branches.

Returning to the foreshore and the waiting small boat which carried provisions and equipment from the parent vessel - to which the Captain, Acting Lieutenant Charles Robbins made periodical visits the group made their way to the native "Yarra Yarra". Here the explorers spent yet another night. Next day Grimes, Robbins and Flemming, the journalist of the expedition travelled three miles up the stream to where Flemming noted the suitability of the area (where Melbourne now stands) for the establishment of a township. The three men rowed their small boat further still to some falls, then returned to the mouth of the river with the idea more fixed in their minds than ever that the country through which they had travelled could support a reasonably large sized population.