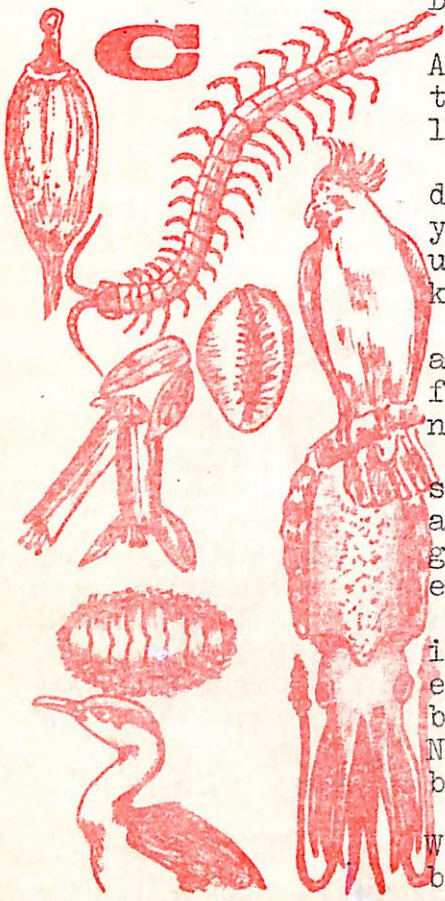
NATURE NOTES

Ringwood Inspectorate — Vol 5 No 4 — Price: 4d each

Registered at GPO, Melbourne : : for transmission by post as a periodical



Identify these things which begin with "C"

Dear Girls and Boys,

The southernmost point of land on the Australian continent is Wilson's Promontory. Here abounds plant and animal life.

With my family, I went to the 'Prom' during the May vacation. (Did I hear you say? "What! In this weather!" Fortunately the weather treated us very kindly.

As in every National Park all flora and fauna are protected giving us a perfect opportunity to observe life in natural form.

We made the most of our stay there - saw almost 40 different birds, collected about 25 different shells, observed a great variety of plant and sea life and even fed rosellas and wallabies.

The role of National Parks is very important. Because of our fast disappearing wild life, we should respect and be thankful for the work done by the National Park Authority and associated bodies.

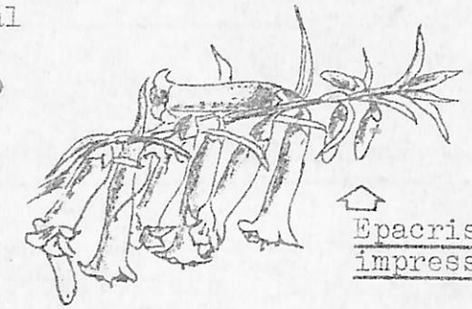
If you have the chance, visit Wilson's Promontory! Like us, you will be tremendously interested and excited with the many things to be discovered there. Best wishes to you all,

G. WHITE.

Name _____ Grade _____

Things to Look for

* Victoria's State Floral Emblem Epacris impressa Pink Heath will be found in bloom now. There is much color variation. Note the little dimples at the base of each flower.



Epacris impressa.

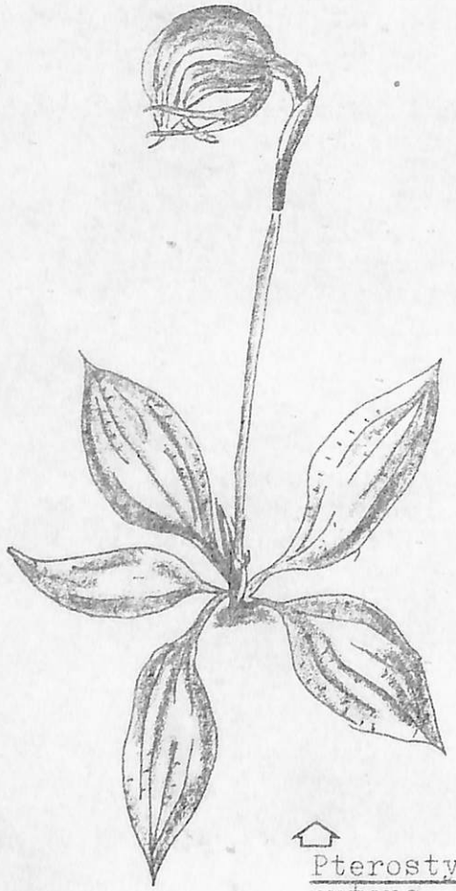
* * * *

* If you know some uncleared bushland you may find the leaves of the Nodding Greenhoods (Pterostylis nutans). I have found them very early this year.

* * * * *

* Gungunnu (Gungurru) ⇨ Eucalyptus caesia is a small tree from Western Australia which is widely planted in school and home gardens. It usually flowers in July but looks early this year.

* * * * * *
* * * *

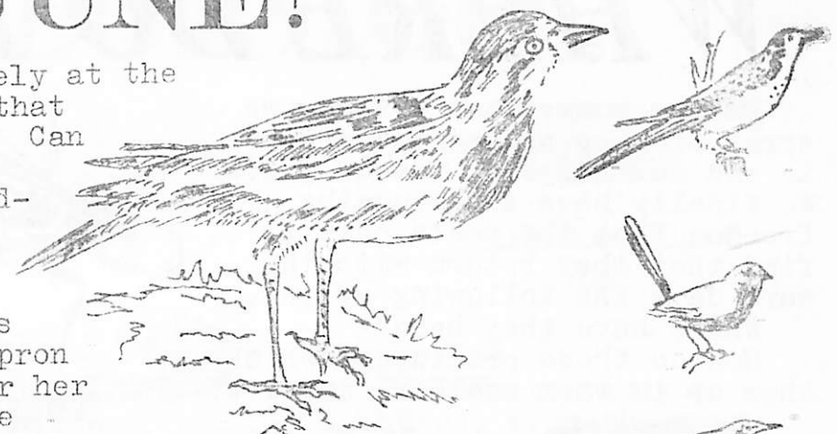


Pterostylis nutans.

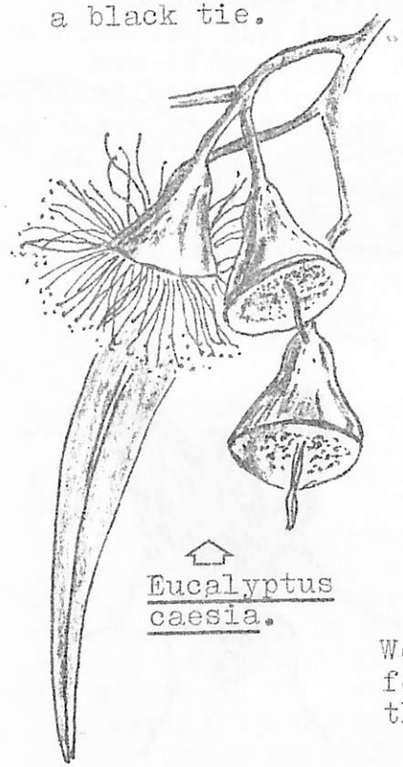
in JUNE!

Can you identify these birds? ⇩

Look closely at the mudlarks that you see. Can you tell mother mudlark from father mudlark? Mother has a white apron just under her chin while father wears a black tie.



Female Mudlark.



Eucalyptus caesia.

▲

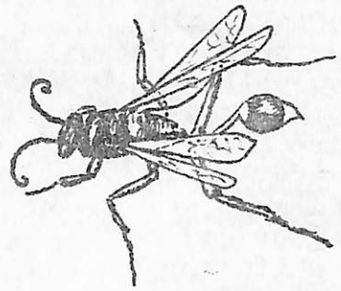
We have left this space for you to draw a bird that you see this month.

WHERE DO THE

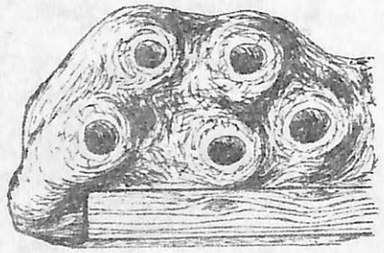
During summer and autumn, we spray or hang up "magic" strips to rid our homes of insect pests. We finally have a few months freedom from the pests only to find that they return with the warm days the following spring.

Where have they been?

How do these creatures, which show up in warm weather, survive?



Mud-dauber Wasp.



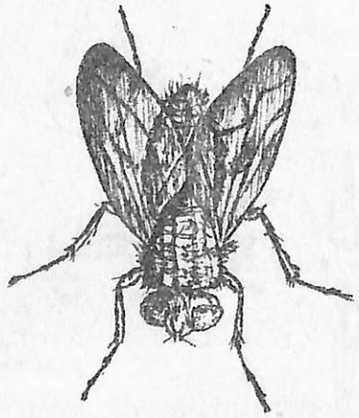
Nest of the Mud-dauber Wasp.

WASPS.

The Australian mud-dauber constructs several mud cells in a row or group. The cells are filled with partially-paralysed caterpillars which remain fresh but inactive. A single egg is laid at the end of each cell. The following season the egg hatches and feeds on the caterpillar before completing its life-cycle. (See Letter Box)

FLIES.

Even today the true story has not been solved. The flies which appear at the start of each summer could be immigrants from the warmer parts of Australia. Although in the summer the fly completes its life cycle in three weeks, it is possible that a few flies survive the winter as dormant larvae, pupae or imagines. (Perfect adult insects).



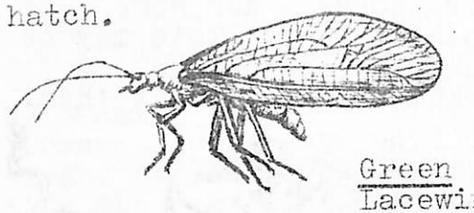
House Fly.

INSECTS GO ?

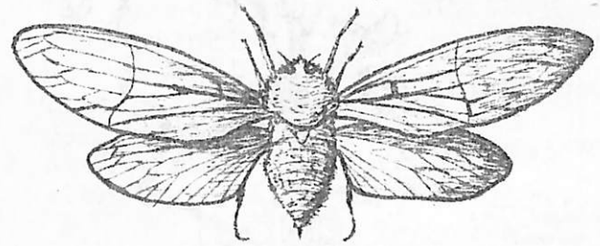
LACEWINGS.

The adult female deposits her eggs on the tips of very slender thread-like stalks. Here they stand like pin mould until the warm weather in spring when they hatch.

Green Lacewing eggs.



Green Lacewing



Hairy cicada

CICADAS.

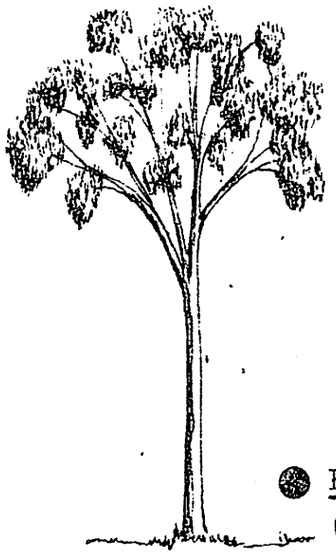
When the nymphs hatch, from the eggs deposited in twigs, they fall to the ground and immediately begin to burrow beneath the surface. Here they burrow and feed on the root juices of the plants. They remain beneath the soil for anything from 3 to 17 years, to emerge in a summer, living as adults for only a few days.

DRAGON FLIES.

The eggs are laid on the surface of ponds in autumn where they hatch. The nymphs then spend the winter on the floor of the lake, stream or pond. They closely resemble the pond floor as they move around in search of food. This is an excellent camouflage. In the spring each nymph crawls out of the water to split down the back and allow the adult insect to emerge.

Dragon-fly nymph

Plants Grow in



In parks, in school grounds, at home, along roadsides, or in the bush we are likely to find a great many plants. Let us look closer at some of them and find some ways that they differ. Do you know their names? Ask some person to help you. This may be your teacher or another boy or girl who has already learnt them.

Eucalyptus radiata
(Common Peppermint)

Trees have strong trunks which support the branches where they receive plenty of sunlight. On the branches we find leaves, and sometimes flowers or seed cases. Do you know why plants need sunlight? Have you learnt to recognise any of the gum trees, wattle trees or she-oaks?

Some plants do not have strong stems. So that their leaves maybe placed where they receive plenty of sunlight they twist and climb; often on other plants.

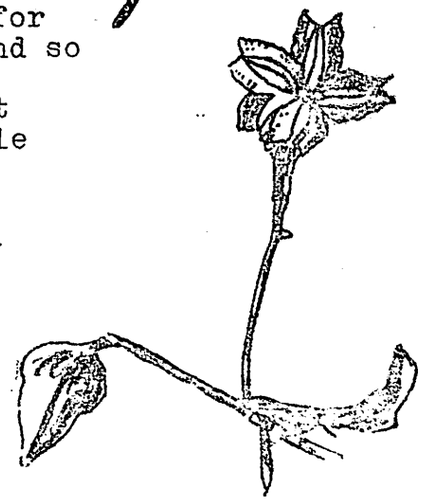
Look for some of these.

Purple Coral Pea
Hardenbergia violacea.

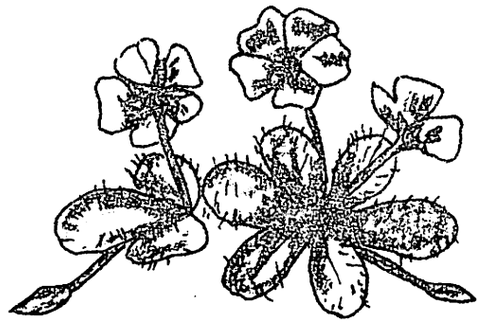
Different Ways

Sometimes there is nothing for these plants to twine around and so they scramble over the ground twining around each other. It is not surprising to find Purple Coral Pea creeping over old stumps or along the ground. Look for it.

Some plants just creep over the ground and do not climb at all. None is so well known as Running Postman. The flowers are pea-shaped and a bright red, with leaves rather like the leaves of clovers (in threes) except that they have wrinkled frilly edges. Not so well known is the Trailing Goodenia with its yellow flowers on short stalks and the leaves and stems flat along the ground



Goodenia lanata



Drosera whittakeri

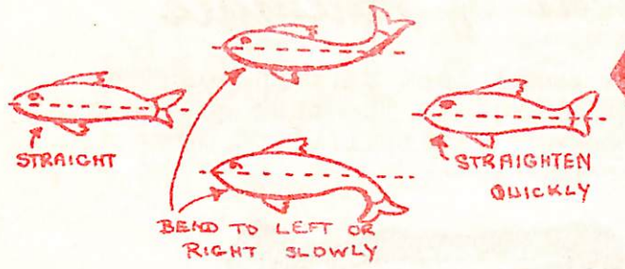
What plants can we find that don't appear to have trunks or stems? Sundews are often very small plants with tiny rosettes of green or reddish leaves lying flat against the ground.

Try to remember where you find these plants. Do not pick them because you will get a lot of pleasure next year in going back to search for them.

MOVEMENT!

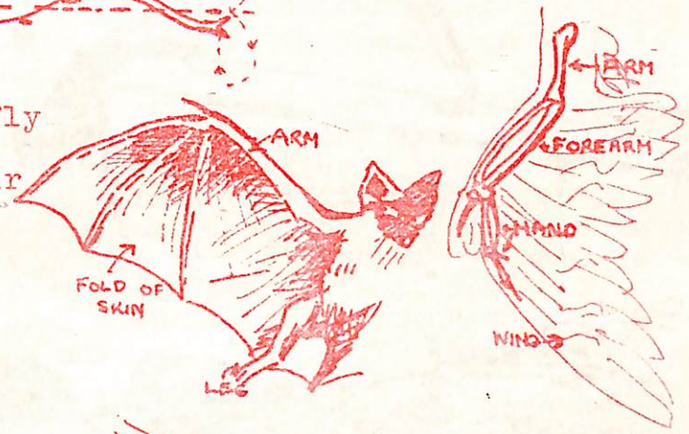
All living things move. Simple animals move by contraction and expansion of parts of their bodies. Others wave tiny hairlike coverings to move themselves through the water. More highly developed animals have muscles for movement. Where the muscles are attached to a rigid skeleton, movement can be more rapid. Here are some ways in which animals move: See if you can discover any others!

The HYDRA, a tiny freshwater animal, glides by contracting and expanding its foot; it swims by waving its tentacles; it can loop and somersault.

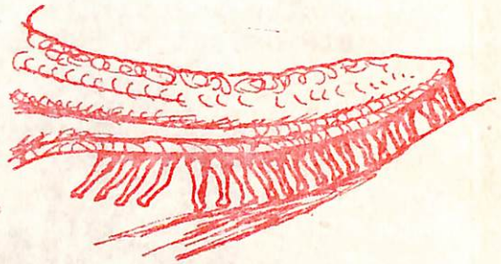


FISH swim by a "sculling" movement of their tails, which make a figure of eight movement and move from side to side.

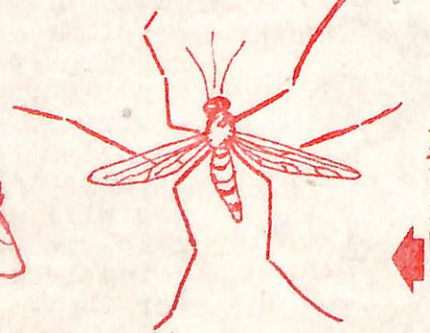
BIRDS and BATS fly by a "rowing" movement. Their forearms make forward and downward strokes.



The Arm of the STARFISH has contractile or tube feet provided with suckers to "hook and pull".
If a starfish should lose an arm it is able to grow another.

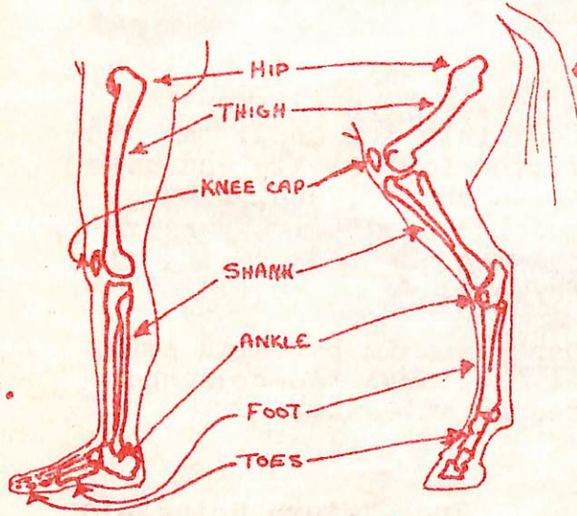


Housefly



Mosquito

INSECTS have jointed limbs for walking. They fly by a "rowing" movement. Their wings are not limbs, and have no bones.



MAN and most four-footed animals walk by a "poling" movement. The limbs are jointed for smoother movement.

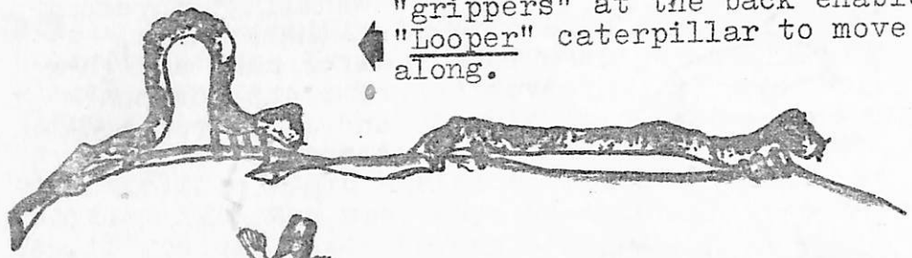
Man walks on sole of foot.

Horse walks on third toe.

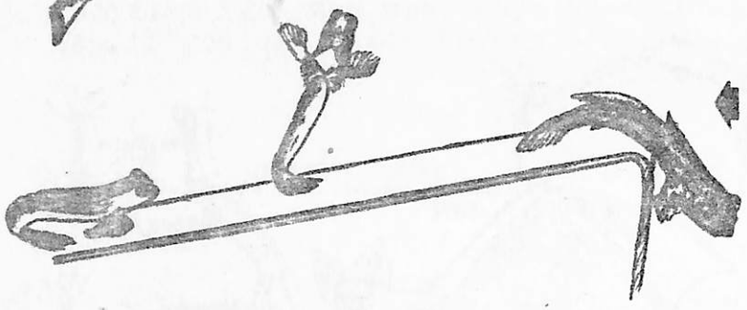
Sketches - Mrs.G.Hensler
Blackburn Lake.

More Movement of Animals

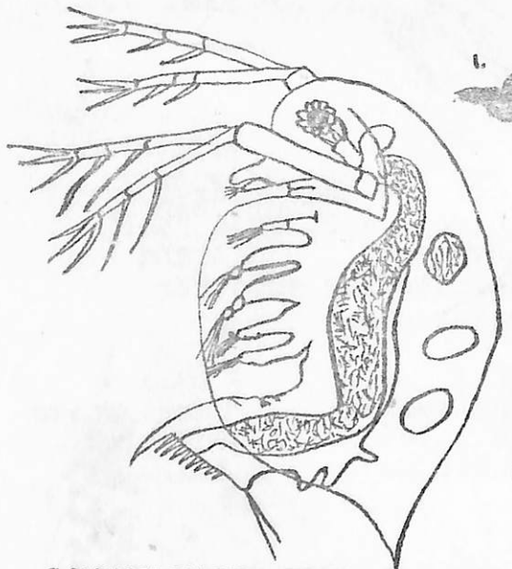
Six small feet up front and two "grippers" at the back enable the "Looper" caterpillar to move along.



On a ramp, the Mud-Skipper shows how he can move. Sometimes they use their tails to make yard-long jumps.



A moving Clam extends its foot into the sand, the tip of the foot swells and acts as an anchor, and, the muscles of the foot contract, drawing the body of the clam forward.



Daphnia swim by rapid jerks of the large two-branched second antennas.

COMMON WATER-FLEA (Daphnia)
Actual size - 2mm approx.

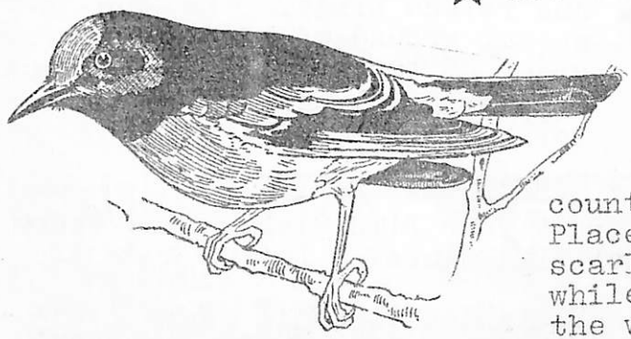
LETTER BOX

Send your letters to :-
Editor, 'Nature Notes',
S.S. No. 4860, BLACKBURN LAKE,
Florence Street,
NUNAWADING. 3131.

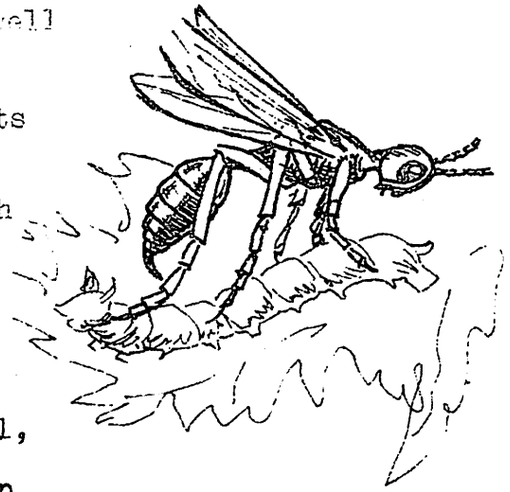
Our first contribution this month comes from Andrea Pollard of Norwood High School.

At Launching Place we have a bush block where many animals and birds dwell. One group is a family of Scarlet Robins. One morning after a light over-night shower, a puddle had formed in a dip on our tent. I was walking up to the barbecue, when a few yards in front of me I saw a baby Scarlet Robin. I came to within a few feet of it before it fluttered off. I saw it again several minutes later, perched on a branch in the tree next to the tent. While I was watching, a splash of water flew up from the pool in the tent, then a head popped up over the ridge of the tent. Down from the trees they drifted until the family of Robins were all together bathing contentedly. It was quite funny to watch the miniature fountain of water and the tiny feathered heads peeping over the edge of the tent.

★ ED. Yes Andrea it is often very amusing to watch the antics of birds. Sometimes they seem to put on a show for the benefit of we humans. In high country such as at Launching Place you will see the scarlet robin in summer while we only see him in the winter months.o o o o



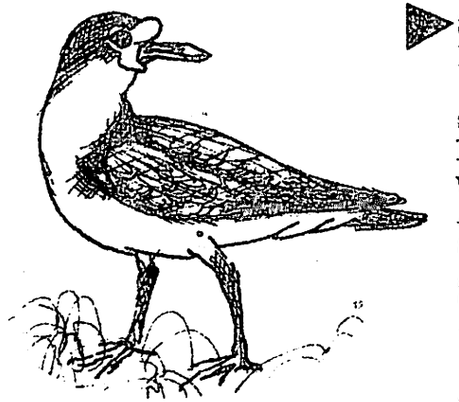
From Jack Spain, Camberwell Central. Grade 4A.



One summer day I was watching a wasp building its nest. All but one cell was sealed. I saw it was flying and coming back with a weeny bit of mud for the nest that would soon dry and become hard. After a long time of going and coming with mud, I say it come back with something different. It was a small, green caterpillar that was put in the cell by the wasp. Very strange indeed was that after it had finished most of its work it went inside itself and stayed there for a few hours, then when it came out again it started sealing off the cell. I think it was the female because only they build nests and lay eggs.

ED: Congratulations Jack on an excellent observation.

****



Sally-Anne Hayes from Bennettswood S.S. writes -

We have a Bird Club at out school and we meet for one hour each Friday. One day we went to the Zoo to see the Australian birds. In our school ground we often see a group of spur-winged plovers. They are very neat birds and very noisy in wet weather.

Spur-winged plover

ED: We are glad to hear of your Bird Club. Are there many schools who conduct Bird Clubs? Let us know of your activities.

During the vaction I visited Tasmania where I saw many spur-winged plovers: so many, in fact, I suggest these birds are nominated as Tasmania's State Emblem!

From Cathy Hensler, Grade 3, Blackburn Lake.

I went to a picnic at a riding school. At it we saw a tame bird. He would glide down through the trees. He would eat breadcrumbs off our hands. He is a noisy miner. He is a young bird. His name is Shelty. All the horses at the riding school are called bird names like Currawong, Pheasant and Redwing, so when they had a tame bird they called it a horse name. Shelty is short for Shetland which is a very small pony.

ED: Birds are often given human names, such as Joe and Donald. It is good to know some birds get horse names!!!

Seriously you are lucky to have birds which are so tame in that area. When birds are quiet you can observe them so much better.

****

From Susan Brownsea, Blackburn East, Grade 3A.

During the recent hot weather we put water out for the birds and we noticed that we had some wattle birds in our trees, so my Daddy decided to make up a mixture of honey and water for them, they must have liked it because we now have six wattle birds in our back yard, they are very interesting to watch as they fly in and out of the trees chasing each other. ED: Good for Dad.

****

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

Answers to Questions Page 3.

1. Pallid Cuckoo 2. Blue Wren 3. Honeyeater
4. Crow 5. Swallow 6. Brush Turkey (Bustard)

Answers Vol. 5, No. 3 (Cover) from top to bottom

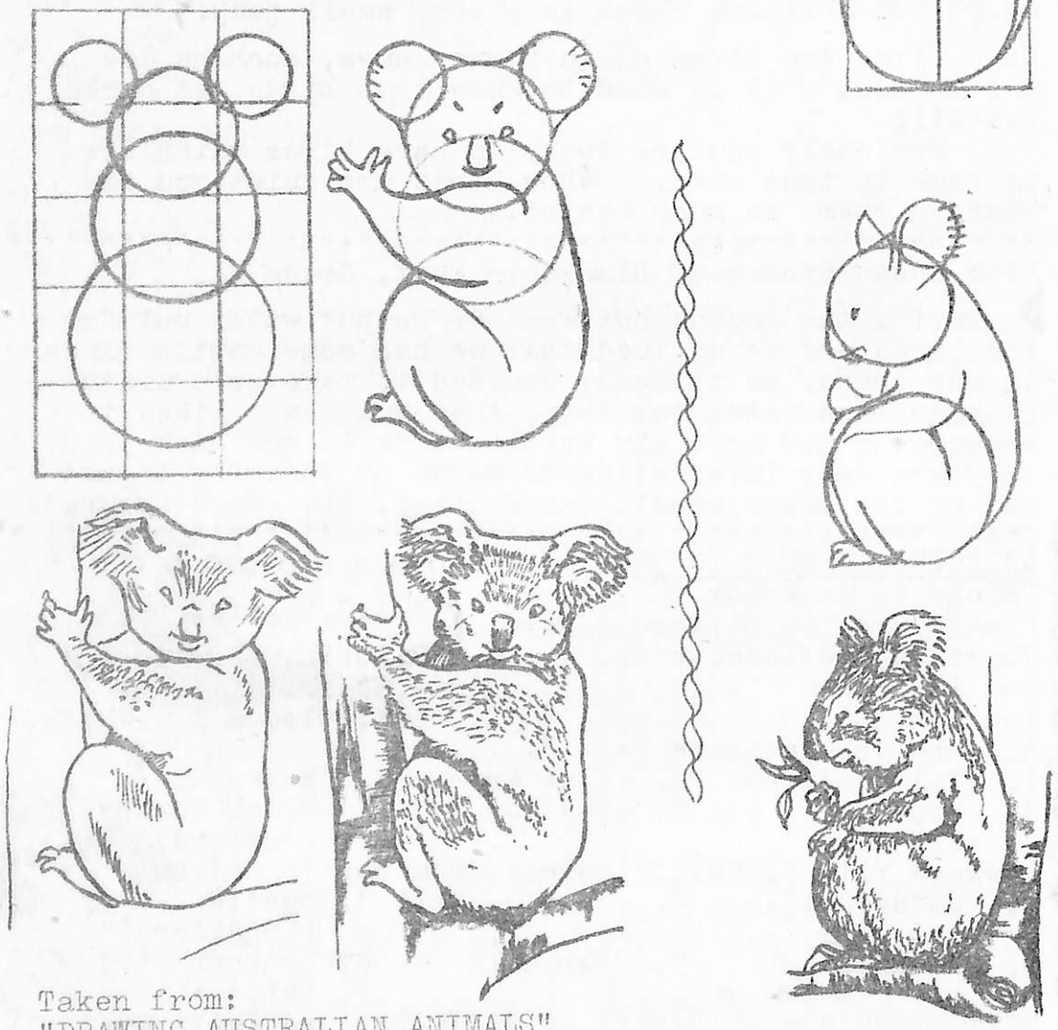
1. Bandicoot 2. Bubble Shell 3. Beetle (Longicorn)
4. Banksia 5. Barnacle 6. Butcher Bird 7. Bat.

* * *

NEXT ISSUE due at Depots on WEDNESDAY 3rd JULY.

Let's Draw a Koala.

The guide will help you to draw a Koala fairly accurately. Have a picture beside you so you can create the texture of its coat. Good drawing!



Taken from:
"DRAWING AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS"
Margo Mahood.
(Whitcombe and Tombs)

Men in Nature

CHARLES STURT.

1795-1869.

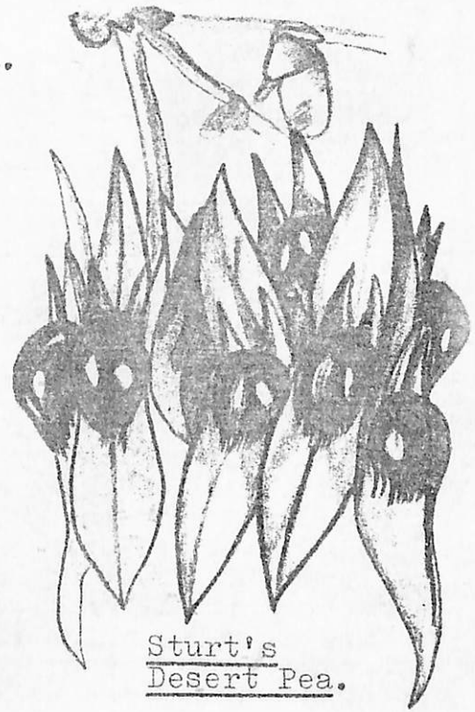
Born in India and educated in England, Sturt came to Australia as a captain in charge of convicts in 1826.

Sturt is remembered for his epic voyage in a whaleboat down the Murray River. The difficult thousand mile return upstream almost killed him and his men. Half blind and seriously ill, he returned to England in 1832 to recover.

On his return in 1834 he worked for the government as Surveyor-General in South Australia. His greatest and most difficult journey began in 1844 when he attempted to reach the centre of Australia. Lack of water, terrible heat (up to 125 degrees) and illness defeated Sturt and his party.

He became Sir Charles in 1869, the year he died. It has been said that Sturt was "the most heroic and daring of Australia's explorers".

On his inland trip he discovered Cooper's Creek, Diamantina River and the Stony Desert. He climbed Broken Hill in the Barrier Range, not realizing that a fortune in silver lead and zinc lay beneath his feet.



Sturt's Desert Pea.

Nature News

THE MYSTERY OF THE DIRTY WASHING

At Leeton in N.S.W. housewives were mystified by the appearance of black specks on their washing, specks which could not be shaken or brushed off.

The local agronomist solved the mystery when he discovered that the specks were from the hat-thrower fungus - pilobolus fungus. It had been growing in animal manure spread near the clothes line.

Apparently the spores are eaten by horses and cattle and grow in manure. Eventually the fungus on maturing, swells, ruptures and showers its hatlike tip (containing the spores) several feet towards the nearest source of light, which in this case was Leeton's washing.

The moral of course is don't spread manure within 10ft. of your washing.

We would be grateful if some reader could supply us with a sketch of this N.S.W. fungus.

IT'S AN ILL WIND . . . .

There's an old tale that trees starved of water give off their finest blooms. The story goes that wise nature, realising death is at hand, makes the trees bloom so that they will throw off seed to preserve their line. TRUE or FALSE, Reg Foster, the Honey Week man, says the lanky sugar-gums around Ballarat and in the Western District have been blooming superbly for the first time in 10 years.

Honey men are overjoyed. Sugar-gum is the rarest and most exquisite of honeys. Also blue gums that haven't bloomed for years have been in flower.

Flame trees, which bloom only when they feel like it anyway, has never been hotter and hibiscus this year have blossomed as though in the tropics.

The KOALA

In conjunction with the Koala Survey (1968) we have much pleasure in providing you with this supplement. The Nature Notes Committee is very grateful to Mr. T. Oxlee, Secretary of the Koala Survey Committee, and the School Forestry Branch for the supply of material to present this inset.

The Koala's Silent Enemy!

Girls and boys can you imagine what this enemy might be? Perhaps a fox a dingo or even the dreaded bushfire. No it is none of these, but the manna gum, the koalas favourite food tree.

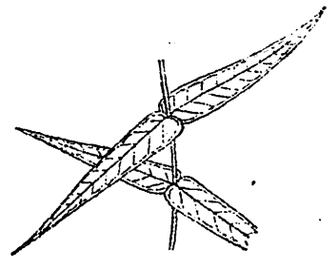
To explain this let me take you back to the year 1935. This was the year that many of the koalas in the Melbourne Zoo became extremely sick and died.

A keen naturalist, Mr. Ambrose Pratt became quite concerned about this fact. He wondered if the koalas were being poisoned. Could it be that the manna gum contained a poison in its leaves? His suggestion brought peels of laughter from fellow scientists. This did not deter Pratt, whose hopes were raised when he related this theory to a botanist Mr. St. John of the National Herbarium. Mr. St. John exclaimed "You are on the right track! I can tell you positively the sugar gum is poisonous, and I have read somewhere that the manna gum is too". Mr. St. John explained how the poison, prussic acid, is released when two chemicals are brought into contact under certain circumstances, e.g. chewing the leaves. Numerous deaths had apparently been reported in sheep and cattle after they had eaten the young leaves of the sugar gum. Evidence was now available to show that sugar gums were poisonous, but it was not until Pratt had written to Mr.A.R.Penfold, Curator of the Sydney Technological Museum that he was told of the work of a Sydney scientist Mr.H.Finnemore who proved that manna gum leaves contained a poison, particularly in the young leaves. The amount of poison varied according to the locality, soil type and season.

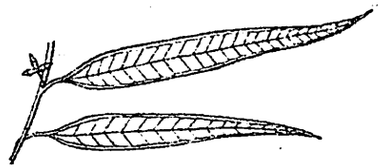
Instinct has warned the koala that he must not eat juvenile and sucker leaves and at certain timesof the year he must leave the manna gum altogether and feed from an alternative species of eucalypt. In Victoria some of the alternative food trees are messmate, swamp gum, red gum, yellow box, candlebark gum, blue gum and long-leaved box.

Next time you see a koala try to identify its food tree. It may be a manna gum, or one of the others mentioned here, or it is perhaps a different species altogether.

MANNA GUM



Young leaves of manna gum.



Adult leaves of manna gum.

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME

The common name "koala" was used to describe the animal, after early naturalists, observing aborigines not wishing to drink, say "koala" (meaning no drink) and pass the drinking vessel on.

Aboriginal tribal names for the koala included kabor, koolah, cola, colah and kola.

The scientific name is..

Phascolarctus	cinereus
Greek word meaning leather bag (pouch) and bear.	means: a shy grey colouring.

o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o

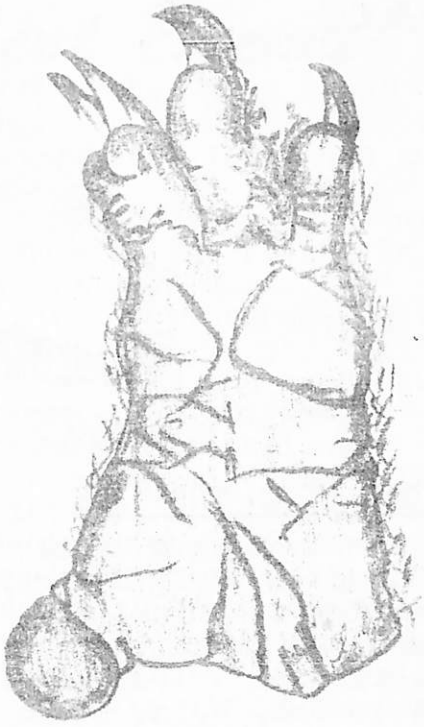
THE CALL OF THE KOALA

In the early days of N.S.W. koalas were commonly called monkey bears. Having little regard for nick names the koala remains unruffled providing he has sufficient to eat.

He can of course be angry, and in the mating season, especially his voice is raised above all others of the forest night, excepting perhaps that of the big flying phalanger. The koala call, loud hoarse and grating, has been likened to the sound produced by a saw ripping through a thin board - only deeper. This fearsome sound has frightened many a moonlight bush walker.

*KOALAS AS CLIMBERS

HAND



FOOT

Look at the hands and feet of the koala to see how they are adapted to living a life in the trees.

O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O

*MAN'S DEBT TO THE KOALA

After studying the powerful arms and shoulders of the koala, a Melbourne surgeon, Sir Colin Mackenzie, developed a type of splint which has been used in many countries for the treatment of poliomyelitis.

O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O

See SCHOOL PAPERS APRIL 1968 for more information.
Supplement to Nature Notes, June 1968.

O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O