

Ivan Binns

NATURE NOTES



Photo. F.J.C.Rogers

Banksia Burdettii

This is a rare and beautiful
West Australian species flowering
in a Ringwood garden.

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★ PRIZE LETTER

● It was no easy task to choose our first prize letter, but careful consideration of content and style decided that the prize should go to Ross Holcombe, Grade 6, Blackburn East. Congratulations Ross! To those who missed out, keep your letters rolling in.

● Ross's prize is, "Australian Pond and Stream Life", one of the delightful Periwinkle series, published by Landsdowne Press. Subjects include reptiles, fish, insects and water plants.

* * * * *

Ross writes,

➤ "When our family arrived home after an outing one day in November, some untidy sticks and twigs were found on the driveway. Upon further investigation, we found a pair of doves building a nest in the hawthorn tree. The nest was hardly more than six feet from the ground. The birds had placed so very few sticks and twigs together that we could not believe it possible to lay eggs in the nest.

We encouraged the birds to stay by placing food beneath the tree and by trying to be as quiet as possible. The father bird came each morning to feed the mother bird.

Two baby birds arrived but did not leave the nest until they were almost as large as the parents. By that time it was very crowded in the nest. It was noticed that the whole family stayed near the nest and was often seen to roost at night in nearby trees.

Several weeks later, a second batch of eggs was laid, but unfortunately, a strong wind blew them out of the family nest. The whole family stayed near the nesting bird.

A third setting of eggs was laid and mother bird is hatching them - three months after the nesting activities began.* * * * *

For Illustration, See Back Page.

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Committee of
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*From the
Editor ...*

Dear Girls and Boys,

Most of you will be familiar with the phrase "the Wonderland of Nature" but have you ever begun to think of all that this can mean. "I wonder", can lead the seeker into realms of beauty and discovery that are beyond all expectations.

"I wonder" what is under this piece of bark; why a leaf has this particular marking; why such a bird nests in this unusual way; what is behind this stone; and so on.

This wondering leads us to watch, explore and so to learn.

No discoveries, no advances in science, have ever been made without someone first "wondering". So let us all become "wonderers"

We have entered the season of autumn when colours of trees change and animals and birds seek a refuge ready for the winter. Why does this happen?

Look around, wonder and enjoy this wonderful world of ours.

Through the months ahead, Nature Notes will help you to find the answers to some of your questions so I wish you "good reading" and much "wondering"

H.G.OSBORN
Principal,

Blackburn Lake S.S.

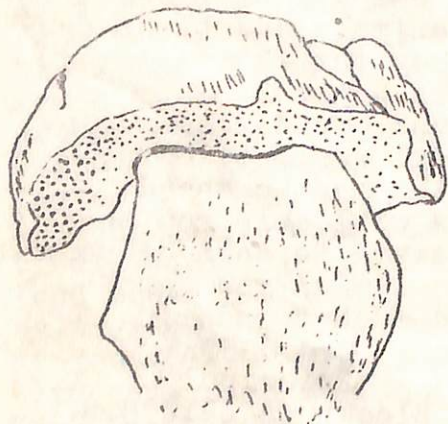
April '69.



In Flower

This month instead of flowers I think you will find Fungi more common. This is not the only month that we find Fungi but they seem to be more plentiful during the next few months.

For the last few years Ringwood people have been finding some giant fungi. Some of these have measured 24 inches across and weigh many pounds. They have pores instead of gills. There were some of these found at Hall's Gap years ago which were 36 inches across.



Boletus

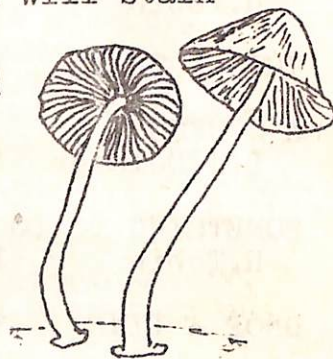
Pixie Parasol (*Mycene interrupta*) is a small (about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch) blue toadstool. Do you notice the little white foot at the base of the stalk?

If you pick Inky Caps (*Coprinus* spp.) and leave them for a few days you will soon know why they are called this. Don't leave them where the inky fluid will stain things.

Inky Caps



Pixie Parasol



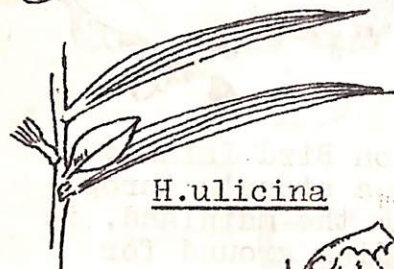
The Fairy Ring Toadstools are quite common in some areas. If you can find a ring one year watch it grow bigger over a few more years.

What other fungi can you find?

Round Ringwood

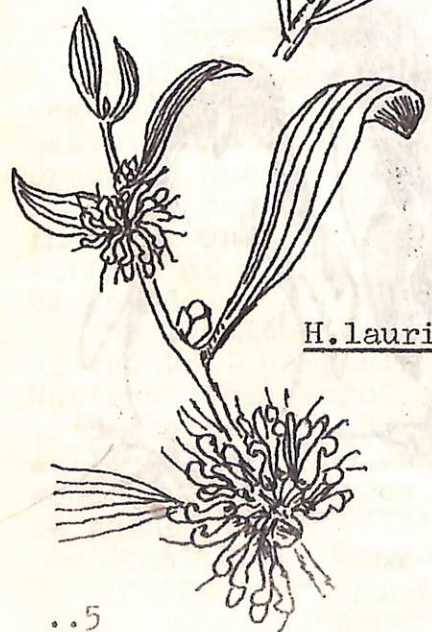


H.teretifolia



H.ulicina

H.nodosa



H.laurina

The Hakeas we are likely to find in the Ringwood area include three local in our bushland still and many that are now grown in gardens.

Dagger Hakea (*H.teretifolia*) is the one least likely to be found. The leaves are round sharply pointed and the fruit is long, narrow and swollen in the middle.

Gorse Hakea (*H.ulicina*) is an easy shrub to recognise. The leaves are flat and stiff, with many nerves showing, and the fruit is conical. It usually grows in thickets.

Yellow Hakea (*H.nodosa*) is a small shrub about 3 feet high with soft foliage (most hakeas have hard leaves and are called Neddle-Bush) and small yellow flowers in autumn. The fruit has crinkles over it.

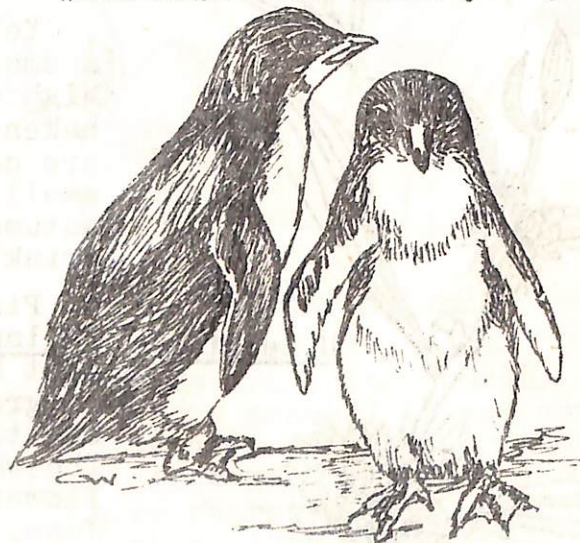
Pincushion Hakea (*H.laurina*) is probably the best known hakea because it is grown in many gardens and sometimes as a street tree. The white and red pincushion flowers appear in May and June.

On Tour with Nature

PORT CAMPBELL has the most magnificent coastal scenery in the Southern Hemisphere, with sheer cliffs of up to 300', natural archways, caves, islands, grottos and blowholes along the 20 miles of coastline.

The history of the area dates back to 1846 when the first settlers took up land in the area.

1 Many ships have been wrecked along this section of coastline, the most famous wreck being the Loch Ard, a three masted clipper of 1623 tons, in 1873. Fifty lives were lost. You can see the graves of some of the victims in the windswept Loch Ard Cemetery. Relics of the ship have been found and recently quite a deal of argument has been aroused as to who had the rights of salvage.

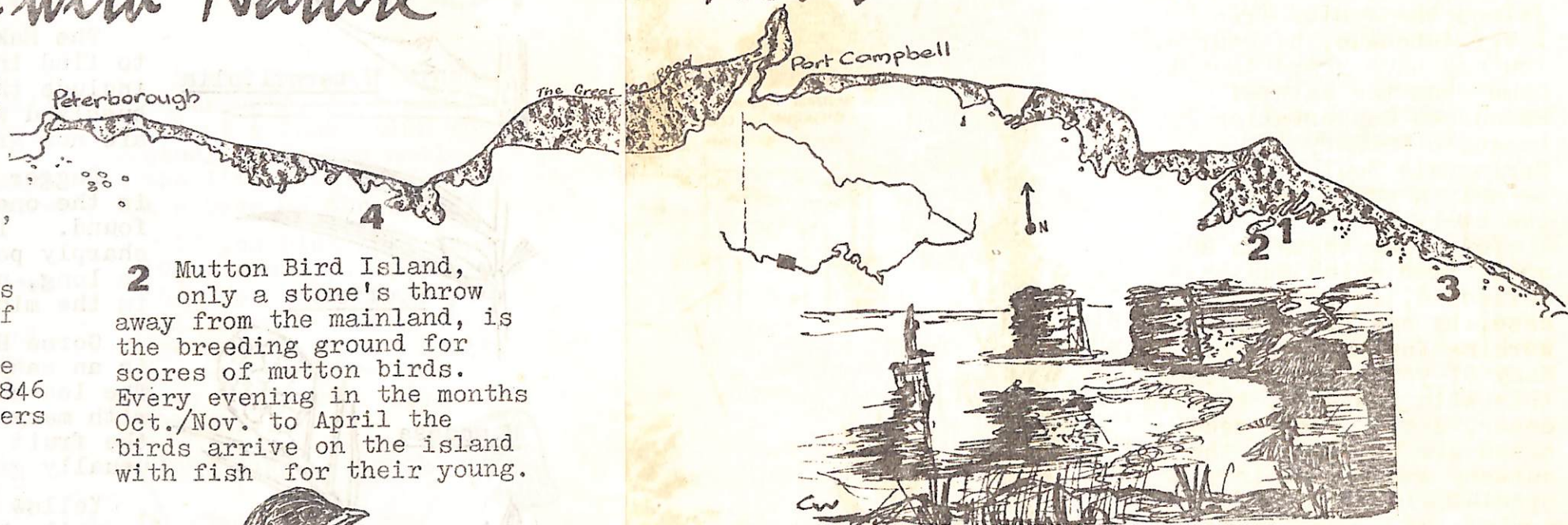


Some of Victoria's largest penguin rookeries will be found here.

2 Mutton Bird Island, only a stone's throw away from the mainland, is the breeding ground for scores of mutton birds. Every evening in the months Oct./Nov. to April the birds arrive on the island with fish for their young.

Notes

PORT CAMPBELL NATIONAL PARK



On the mainland the vegetation is a windswept heathland with clumps of Drooping Sheoke (*Casuarina stricta*) dotted here and there. There is a variety of plant life to be found.

The exciting scenery at the Port Campbell National Park makes a trip there very worthwhile and will be another wonderful experience to be gained by travelling the Great Ocean Road.

3 4 The rock stacks, small islands along the coastline, provide such formations as the Twelve Apostles and London Bridge.

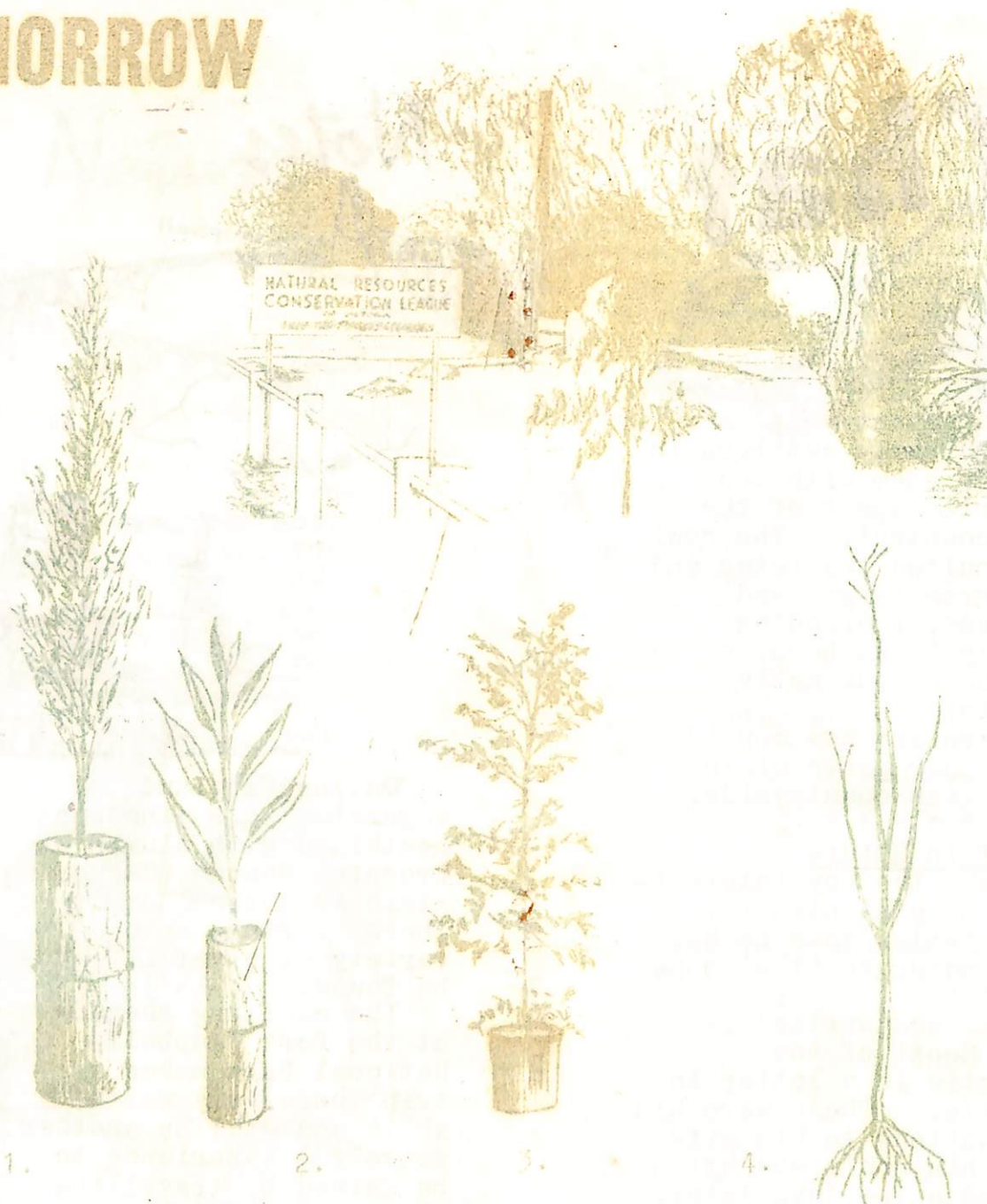


TREES FOR TOMORROW

I'm talking about the tree you received when you joined the Junior Tree Lovers' League, of course. You may have heard that it came from the Natural Resources Conservation League's Nursery in Springvale South, but that is only a small part of the story.

Your tree began as a small seed which was collected, in its seed case, by one of the people working for the League. Many of you will have done this with gum nuts, banksia cones, etc. These seed cases are brought to the nursery and placed into a special glass house for drying out. The seeds are then placed in seed trays to germinate in a heated glass house. Can you imagine hundreds of seed trays placed side by side and covering every square inch of the bench tops?

When the seeds have germinated they are transplanted into 6" veneer tubes, placed in unheated glass houses to "harden up" and then into the open to



continue growing. These are the plants that you receive when you become a member of the Junior Tree Lovers' League.

The rest of the story continues in your garden, but the story of your tree is only a small part of the work of the League's Nursery. They have grown more than 5 million trees; over 182,000 have gone to Junior Tree lovers.

Most of the trees are grown for the use of farmers to improve their properties. Make a list of ways these trees help the farmer. Municipal councils also use these trees for planting in streets and parks. Some of the trees from the nursery can be "grown on" into larger containers. There are trees in 9" tubes, advanced trees in buckets and also advanced deciduous trees which are lifted "open-root" from the soil in winter.

When next in Springvale South, have a look at the 8 acres of nursery with its attractive entrance set amongst native trees and shrubs. Think about the meaning of the name "Natural Resources Conservation League".

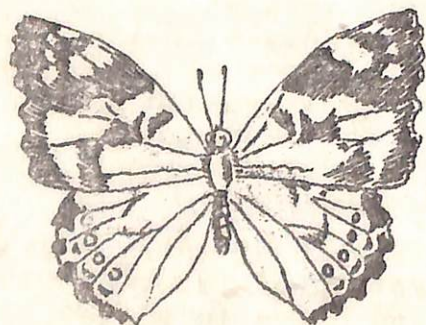
1. Callitris in 9" tube.
2. Eucalypt on 6" tube.
3. Advanced Hakea in bucket.
4. Deciduous ("open root").

This n That



★ It's a Fact

By very careful study botanists have discovered that some insects prefer flowers of a particular colour. Butterflies are attracted by red and white flowers, while moths prefer white and yellow ones with a strong scent. Bees, on the other hand, visit all flowers, but they seem to prefer those coloured blue or purple.



Painted Lady

★ Do you Know? Foxes

Foxes were introduced to this country by the wealthy early settlers to provide them with the favourite sport of the 'old-country'. The new land suited the foxes and they grew larger and stronger, increasing greatly in numbers, at the expense of our native animals.

Foxes are now considered major pests of the Australian countryside.

* * * * *

★ Belief in Nature

"Make the boy interested in natural history. It is better than games. They encourage it at some schools".

This was written by Capt. Scott of the Antarctic in a letter to his wife. These were his instructions to his wife about his son's education. He died a few days later.

* * * * *



Platypus

★ Mummified Mermaids

At the end of the eighteenth century Dr. George Shaw a mammalogist at the British Museum, revealed a clever hoax of the mummified mermaids that sailors would bring home to England from the East. The Chinese in Malaya had heard of the seamen's myths of mermaids and decided to make some money out of it.

They would cut a small monkey across the middle of the chest and 'invisibly' sew a matching-sized hind end of a fish to the front half of the monkey. Having been mummified, this "creature" made a high price with the visiting sailors.

* * * * *

★ Another Hoax!

The same Dr. Shaw, when he first saw the platypus, thought that too, was a clever hoax. He said: it.. "exhibited the perfect resemblance of the beak of a duck engrafted on the head of a quadruped".

* * * * *

★ Did you know that fish cannot go to sleep? At least, not in the way that humans and animals can. This is because they are unable to close their eyes. They do, however have periods when they remain still and do nothing. This is their substitute for sleep and rest.

* * * * *

A CUCKOO ?



At Blackburn we have many native trees and shrubs and some time ago our nature club installed a bird bath. Many and varied are the birds which come to our school ground. Among the favourites are a pair of beautiful and graceful grey birds which have been frequent visitors to our schoolground for some years.

These birds are Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*, a raven like bird from New Holland).

If you have seen the strong, direct but undulating flight of the bird you may be able to guess from where the cuckoo part of its name comes.



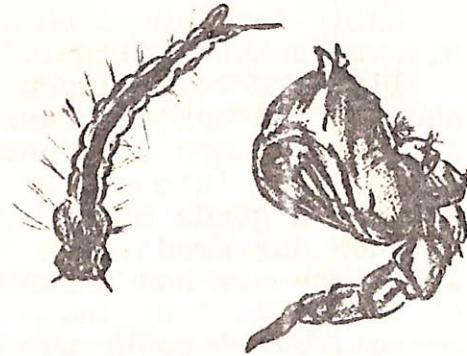
Watch when it alights and see how it shuffles its wings to adjust them. This long grey bird with the black face and throat is partly nomadic and some birds may even migrate northwards, older ones usually remaining to overwinter at home.

For You To Do

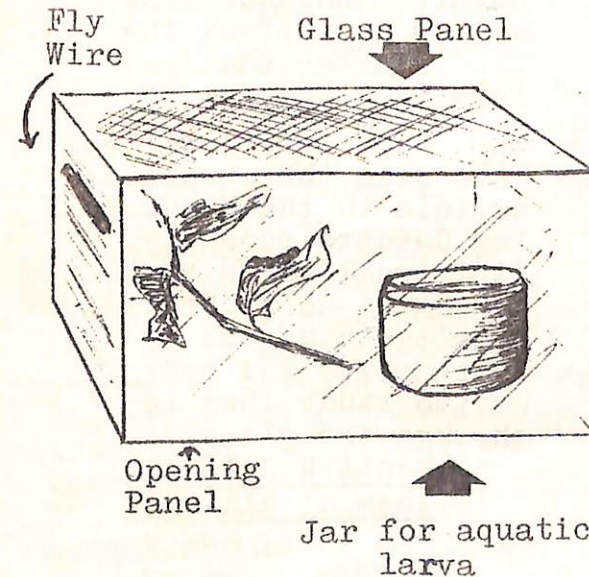
1. Find out the other names for this bird. Are they suitable?
2. What kind of nest does it build? How high up may you look for it?
3. Find out what food it eats. Where does it find its food?
4. How many eggs are laid? What size and colour are they?
5. When you see this bird write and tell me something you liked about him.

Black-faced
Cuckoo Shrike

Something To Do



Mosquito larva and pupa



Many moths, butterflies and other insects can be bred from egg to adult, while in captivity. A reasonable sized wooden box is needed. One side of the box should be fitted with a glass panel to let in the light and to make observation easy. Another side should have a large hole covered with fly wire for ventilation. If you keep caterpillars and other larvae then be sure that you provide them with food (the type of plant on which they were found). Be prepared for some failures - I once read about an emperor gum moth which remained in the cocoon for just over ten years before emerging as the adult moth.

You could add to the box a jar with water containing aquatic larva such as that of the mosquito or the dragonfly.

Drop a Line

Last month Karen Mac-Andrew of Blackburn Lake sent us some March flies for identification. Here is the reply by Dr. J. A. Thompson, University of Melbourne.

Dear Karen, Your magnificent March flies belong in the family Tabanidae. They are amongst the finest species of this family in Australia as far as size and marking etc goes - full name Erephopsis guttata.

Many members of the March fly family are bloodsuckers feeding on men, as you are doubtless aware! This species is described as "rests on the tree trunks in the coastal forests of E. Australia, and does not attempt to bite". (Tillyard). The larvae are aquatic and carnivorous.

Delightful specimens.

* * * * *

Editor, 'Nature Notes',
State School,
Blackburn Lake,
P.O. Box 30,
NUNAWADING. 3131.

Sally-Ann Ehms from Blackburn East writes..

I'd like to tell you about a redbacked spider. A few weeks ago a spider was brought into our room by a grade 6 boy to show our grade. After the boy had shown it to the rest of the school, our teacher put the redback in a jar. The next day we fed it a fly which she caught and wrapped in the web that she had spun overnight. Another time we saw her attack the fly. After that we left it alone.

ED. Many of you will have seen the excellent article in the Nunawading Gazette recently. It is well worth reading again as redbacks seem to be on the increase. The best way to study them is through the glass.

Don't handle them at all.

From Michael Hook, Grade 4, Blackburn Lake.....
▶ We spent our last holiday at the Edwards River near Deniliquin. One day when walking along the banks of the river, I nearly stepped on three little eggs, which were greyish with brown spots. On looking around we saw a black fronted dotterel waiting anxiously for us to leave. About two days later the babies hatched, and very soon we saw them running after their mother. The eggs and the babies were almost impossible to see against the surroundings.

ED. Good observing Michael. Yes birds are among our best camouflage experts. Have you seen any dotterels around our lake? * * * * *

Carol Baker, Grade 6, Springvale North, tells of an excellent scheme.

▶ I think the Junior Tree Lovers' League is a good idea as it gives you a chance to observe the life and growth of a particular tree. Plenty of trees freshens the air around us. The Junior Tree-Lovers' League should be happening in every school.

Plants By The Hundred
▶ Grade 6 at Montrose started last year to boost the School Fete next November by stocking the plant stall. Dozens of ½ inch high silver birch seedlings which were sure to die over Christmas gave us the idea.

Small cans were easily collected, tops taken out and soil for filling mixed. We learned to plant and water and worked out what area we needed for the plants, how often they would need watering and what sort of plants could be sold.

Tiny seedlings of local gum trees and wattles were also collected for possible use later to replant a local area stripped by roadmaking.

So far the score is over 100, and the variety is growing.

Target has been set at 500 plants for sale! Have you worked out how much that would be at 20 c per plant?

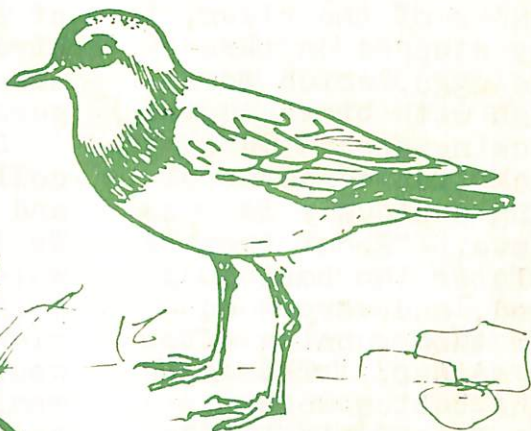
ED. What an excellent idea Montrose! Will be interested to hear of further progress.

More letters next month. Illus. next page.

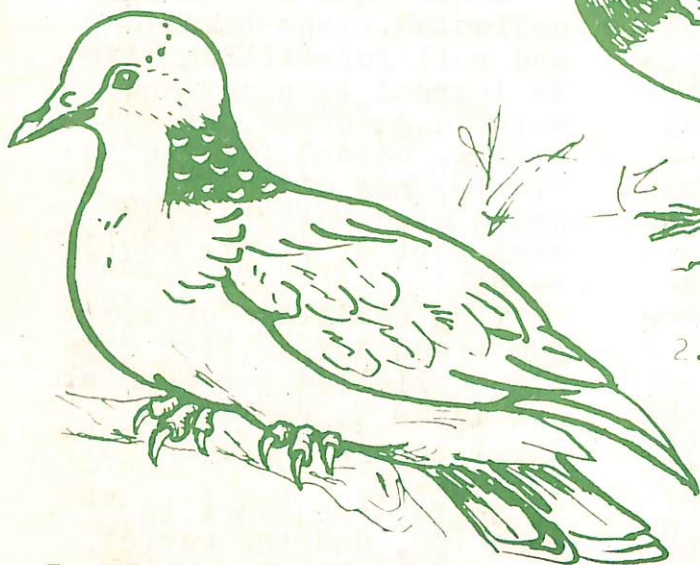
□ □ □ □



1. Red Back or Jockey Spider.



2. Black fronted Dotterel.



3. Indian Turtle Dove.

NATURE NOTES COMMITTEE

MR. F.J.C.ROGERS	..	S.S. LILYDALE
MR. G. WHITE	..	S.S. BLACKBURN EAST
MR. L.J.DELACCA	..	S.S. BLACKBURN LAKE

NEXT ISSUE WILL BE AT DEPOTS ON WEDNESDAY, MAY, 7th.