

# NATURE NOTES



WHITE PLUMED  
HONEYEATER  
(GREENIE)

Sketches by Jack Truscott

AUG  
'69

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# ★ ★ PRIZE LETTER

Off goes another Periwinkle book - this time John Child's "Australian Sea-shore Life" - a fascinating study of the wide variety of life found in and around the sea-shore. Choosing the prize-letter this month was most difficult, but I finally decided the book should go to Heather Cribbes of Form I Ringwood Technical School. I am keeping some other excellent letters for a later issue.

\*\*\*\*\*

At Easter time our family and some friends went to Wyperfeld National Park, While there we saw many birds and kangaroos. A family of emus (mother and six chicks) visited the dry lake pan near our camp. Mallee or Ring-necked parrots fed around our caravan. Many different birds were seen in and around the area. Through our binoculars we saw two huge wedge-tailed eagles.

We rose at daybreak to see about 50 kangaroos browsing among the dunes and through the bush. On the dunes we saw many bird and animal tracks and easily identified those of kangaroo, emu and rabbit. Some we didn't know. Later we saw a big brown beetle moving through the sand and Nature Notes

recognized one of our mystery tracks. Wyperfeld is certainly a lovely spot, interesting, enjoyable and just the place to really study nature.\*\*\*

ED. I heartily endorse your comments Heather and hope to visit Wyperfeld myself in September.



Wedge-tailed Eagle

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## Well Worth Thinking About

Dear Girls and Boys,  
This issue of Nature Notes could arouse some questions for you. Some questions about the things you see about you. This learning to observe to ask questions to try to find out the answers - first by yourself by thinking about it, by watching and listening, by talking with other girls and boys - listening carefully to what they have to say and then by asking your teacher, helps you to be better citizens. If you enjoy a walk along a bush track, to be able to stop and listen to a bird singing or to watch it feeding in the blossom or to smell the scent from the plants around you, why not create this environment around your own home by planting Australian shrubs and trees in your gardens at home and at school.

Get your parents and friends interested in the Australian animals and plants to help make Victoria a more interesting place for people to visit and holiday.

F. J. C. ROGERS

August '69

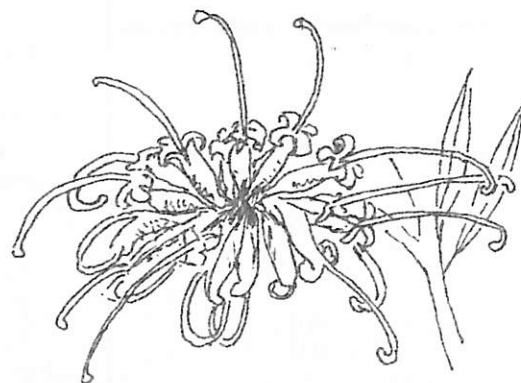


# Grevilleas

Because Grevilleas attract honeyeaters it is not surprising that they should be mentioned in this issue of "Nature Notes". Some of us have common names such as "Spider Flower" or "Silky Oak" or "toothbrush Grevillea", for these plants. What name do you use?

If a count was made of all Grevillea species we would probably find that there are about 300 species found throughout Australia and some of the islands nearby. Grevillea was named by Robert Brown after Charles Greville of the Royal Society of London. Robert Brown, as you probably know, was on board the Investigator with Matthew Flinders when he circumnavigated Australia about 1801-3.

Grevillea plants may be prostrate when they spread along the ground covering large areas, but most are shrubs which are very suitable for growing in gardens while some are large specimen trees.



Red Spider flower  
Grevillea punicea

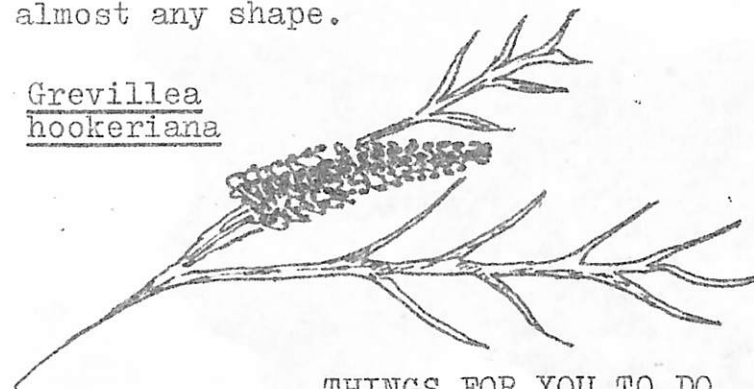


Silky Oak  
Grevillea robusta

The flowers may be almost any colour depending on the particular species of Grevillea. We have "Grey Spider Flower", "Red Spider Flower" etc. The flowers may be arranged in varying groupings including one like a one-sided tooth-brush. The fruit is a tough follicle which splits down one side and releases the two seeds.

Look around your garden at home and at school and see if you can find some Grevillea plants. You could find that the leaves of these plants vary from large smooth-edged leaves to leaves with 3 lobes to leaves of almost any shape.

Grevillea  
hookeriana

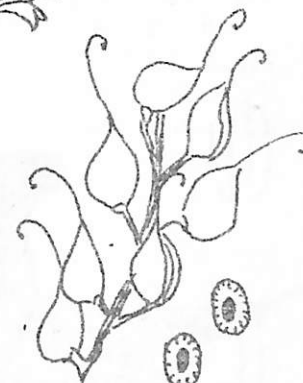


## THINGS FOR YOU TO DO

1. Find the names from books in the school library of 6 species of Grevilleas not mentioned here.
2. Try to find a Grevillea shrub or tree and observe which birds visit it when it is in flower.
3. Try to find a Grevillea bush in flower each month of the year.
4. Look at a Grevillea flower under a hand lens (at least 10 magnifications 10X). Notice that some have hairs on them.
5. Many Grevilleas have their leaves arranged in 3 parts. See how many different shapes and arrangements you can find.



Grevillea  
acanthifolia



Grevillea  
follicles and  
seed.

# This n That



G

See a replica of this huge nugget at our National Museum.

O



"Welcome Stranger"

L

D

Of all the precious metals gold is the most sought after. Gold will not stain and will remain bright for all time. It is a soft metal which may be beaten into gold-leaf as little as one two hundred and fifty thousandth of an inch.

Over \$2,000,000,000 worth of gold has been produced in Australia.

The first record of gold found in Australia was on

the 15th February, 1823 at Fish River, near Bathurst. The discovery was kept secret for fear of an uprising by the convicts.

Gold was probably the first metal known to man.

The largest nuggets ever found in Australia were The Welcome Stranger (2,520 ounces) found near Dunolly, Victoria in 1869 and The Welcome (2,217 ounces) found at Ballarat, Victoria in 1858.

On today's values The Welcome Stranger would be worth about \$71,000 and The Welcome \$62,000.

\*\*\*\*\*

## DID YOU KNOW?

The sand grouse which live in the Kalahari Desert in South Africa use a unique method of transporting water to their young.

The males soak their breast feathers in water, fly home then let their young drink the water from their plumage.

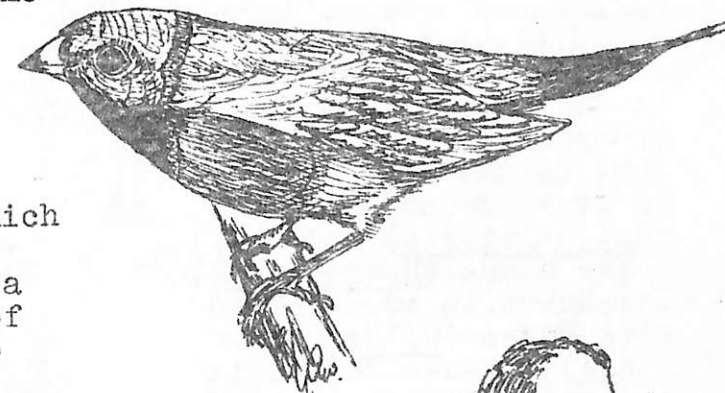
The unusual behavior was first noticed late in the 19th century, but wasn't believed.

Now it has been seen again and documented. The birds use the method only when water shortage is acute.

\*\*\*\*\*

## GUESS WHO ? ? ?

He prepared two books about birds of Australia. On Sept. 18, 1838, he and his wife arrived at Hobart. After studying birds on that island he moved to the continent where he covered most of the land in his search for different birds. His name is remembered in a famous league which bears his name.



This bird is named after the man sketched at right.



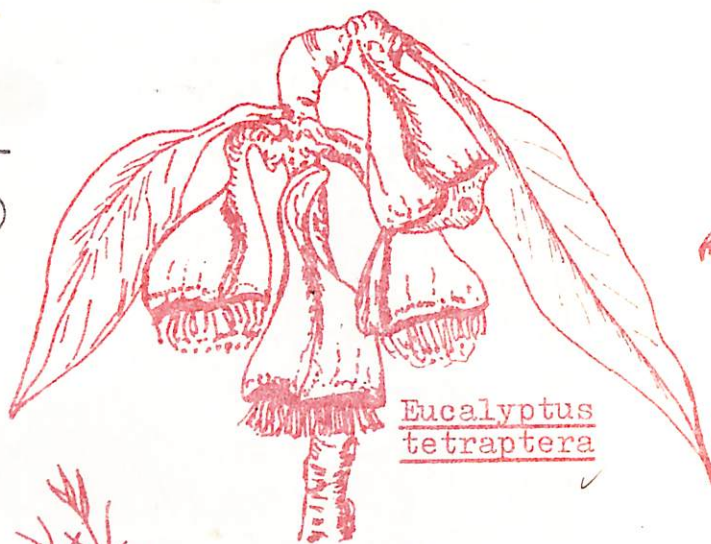


# TODAYS

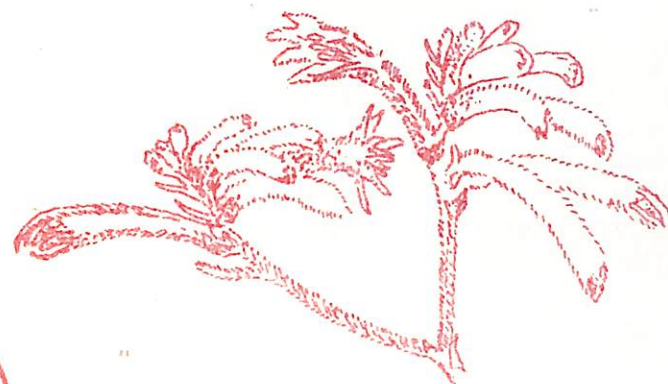
# MENU

# NECTAR

★ Many of the Eucalypts are useful as garden plants as well as attracting many birds. The Ironbark (Euc.sideroxylon) not only attracts honeyeaters but also parrots and lorikeets. Other very useful plants are Euc.leucoxylon rosea, Gungunnu (Euc.caesia) and Bushy Yate (Euc.lehmanni).



Eucalyptus  
tetraptera



Giant Kangaroo Paw  
Anigozanthos flavida



Silky Hakea  
Hakea sericea

★ Pin-cushion Hakea is well-known to many boys and girls but there are other Hakeas which flower at different times that are just as beautiful. Some of the best ones to grow are Sea Urchin (H. petiolaris) and Silky Hakea (H. sericea). One Hakea is even called Bird Hakea (H. orthoichthynca) because the fruit is shaped like a beak of a bird.

★ Grevilleas may at times look like Hakeas, but they too are very good garden plants.



Grevillea  
alpina



Heath  
Epacris  
longiflora



Banksia  
marginata



Melaleuca steedmanii

★ Look closely at these plants which you could find in your home or school garden. They are frequently visited by honeyeaters of many kinds.



Eremophila  
maculata

★ Honeyeaters gather nectar from Kangaroo Paws by means of their long brush-tipped tongues. Because the stem is slender, it sways when the honeyeater alights on it so we usually only find small honeyeaters like the Eastern Spinebill and Greenie on them.

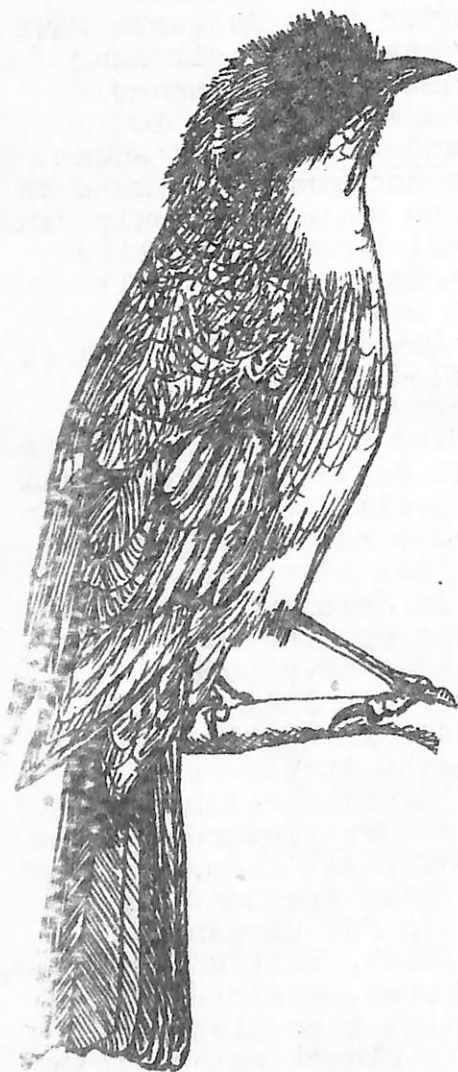
★ Eremophila maculata is called "Emu-Bush" or "Poverty-Bush". The latter name because it is able to survive in inland Australia when most other plants have died because of lack of rain.

★ In Melaleucas - Paperbarks or Honey-Myrtles, we have many beautiful shrubs. They provide food for the birds. Look for the "paper-bark" on the trunk and find out when they flower and what birds visit them.

★ There are many other plants for gardens too - Net-bush, Wattles, Correas, Banksias, Heath etc. Be careful when planting small plants which flower close to the ground as you are only putting the birds within reach of cats.



# ON TOUR *with Nature Notes*



HELMETED HONEYEATER

In almost any area of Victoria you will find species of honeyeaters. So "On Tour" takes you on a quick trip around the countryside to discover some of these interesting birds.

## A BIRD IN DANGER

Just east of Melbourne is the Yellingbo Wildlife Reserve. Situated on the Woori Yallock Creek this reserve was created in 1967 to protect the rapidly decreasing numbers of the Helmeted Honeyeater. Because of man's invasion of his habitat, this bird is in danger of extinction. In appearance this bird is very similar to the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater but the golden head crest, or "helmet" which it sometimes lifts into a crest, makes it a different species. Like other species of honeyeaters it eats insects as well as nectar and favours manna gum, swamp gum, melaleucas and tea-trees as places to find food.



NEW HOLLAND  
HONEYEATER

The Helmeted Honey-eater prefers to nest in a cup-shaped nest suspended low in a bush and as this is usually the first of any bush to be destroyed it seems the bird is dying out because it cannot breed in any other environment.

YELLOW-WINGED (WHITE-BEARDED, NEW HOLLAND) HONEYEATER.

Perhaps you will see this active fellow around your garden, but we will visit Wilson's Promontory where many of these birds were seen last May. Typical of his habitat is the coastal area of tea-tree and banksia where his loud whistling and chatter-

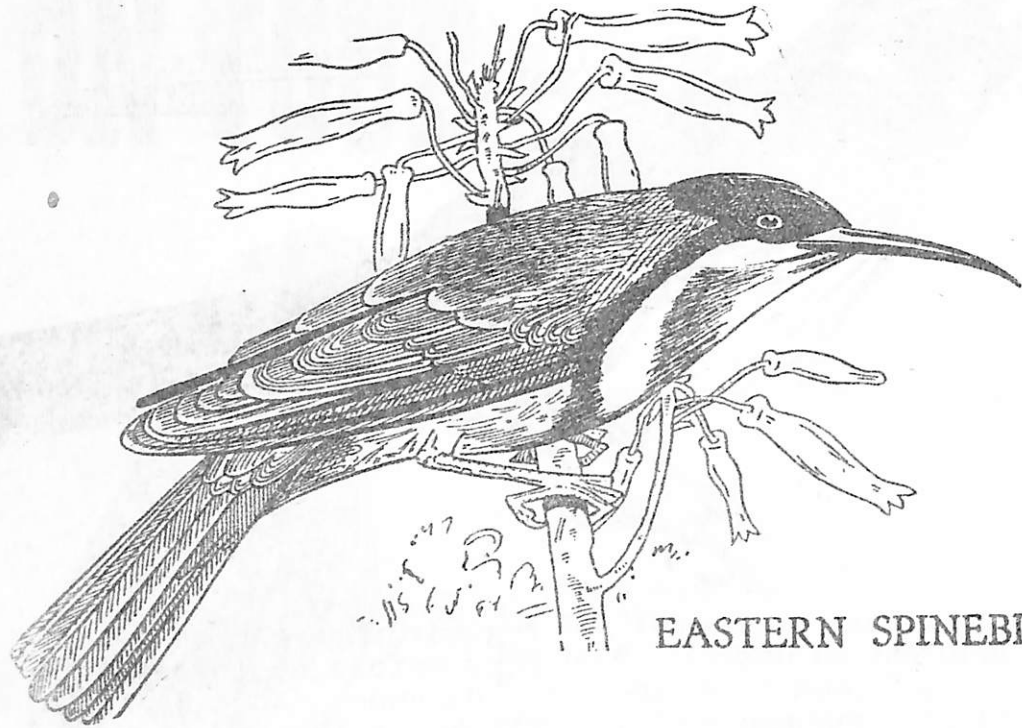
ing warnings can be heard long before he is seen.

Because of his dashing flight he is hard to study closely, but, by waiting patiently he becomes used to your presence allowing you an undisturbed sighting of his activity.

His food consists of nectar, fruit and insects which he captures with fly-catcher-like agility.

Down here we also spotted the following:

Little Wattle Bird,  
Red Wattle Bird,  
Crescent and White-eared Honey-eaters,  
and  
Eastern Spinebill.

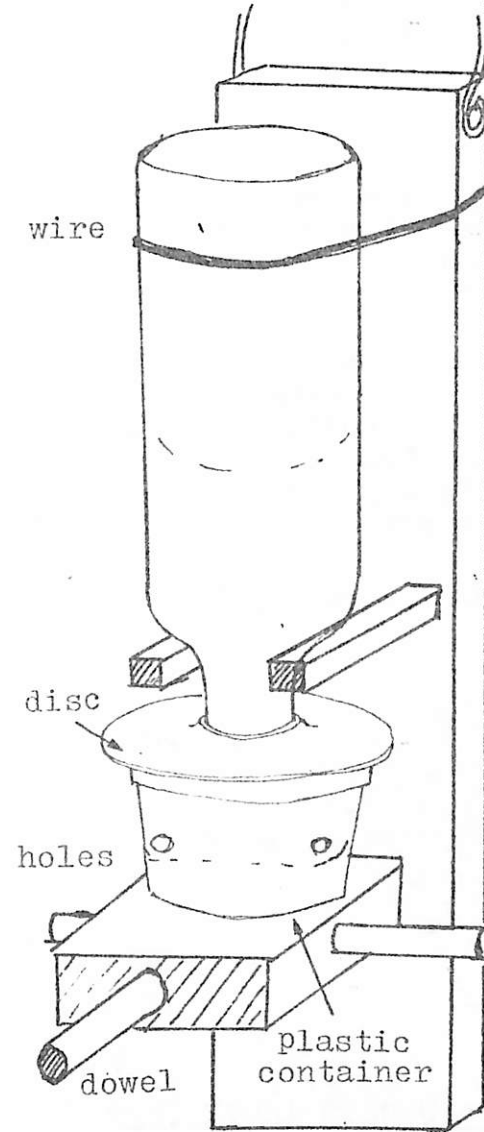


EASTERN SPINEBILL

Here is a perfect example of a bird adapting to civilization. The Eastern Spinebill is a very active bird which usually lives in heath-lands and open country. With his long bill he probes deep into flowers for the much-loved nectar. Often he hovers, like a humming bird, in front of flowers. One of the first things I remember about this bird is the strange, sharp flick made by his wings as he darts away. His call is usually a shrill whistle although it has other shrill, musical notes. Watch for this fellow in your garden.

As you go  
On Tour  
watch for  
these inter-  
esting birds.  
As there are  
sixty-nine  
species found  
in Australia  
you should  
have a chance  
of spotting  
quite a large  
list.

# Something To Do



Feeding Bottle on Frame.

Last year at Blackburn Lake we decided to provide some "home-made" nectar for our honeyeaters, to provide these birds with food at a time when their natural food was getting scarcer, and to allow us the chance to observe these birds at fairly close quarters.

It is not uncommon to see 6 or 7 greenies or a couple of red wattle birds vying for next turn at the bottle.

So what about trying to build your own feeding bottle!

## MATERIALS:

$\frac{1}{2}$ " timber; medium sized bottle with neck slightly over 1" long; rubber disc; small plastic container with tight fitting lid; hole in lid just large enough to accept neck of bottle;  $\frac{5}{8}$ " dowels for perches; small holes in container just above liquid level. Wire to secure bottle to frame.

## MENU:

- 1 lb. raw sugar
- 1 lb. honey
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  pints water.

Mix together and stir over low heat until sugar is dissolved. This nectar will keep in refrigerator for weeks. To feed birds, mix in ratio of 1 part nectar to 2 parts water.

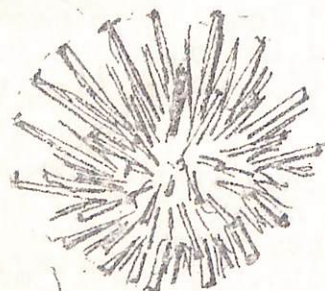


# Drop a Line



★ First letter this month comes from Josine Meijer of Surrey Hills who writes....

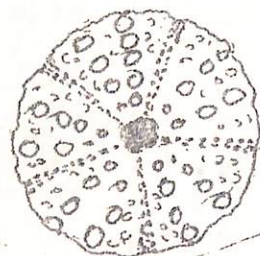
One weekend our family went to Somers which is a place on Western Port Bay. On one of our walks along the beach we found many sea-urchins washed up by the sea. There were many grey ones but also a lot of red or purple ones. I was wondering what the difference between the two could be?



Sea Urchin Complete

★ ED. I am not sure what the difference would be Josine. It could be caused by different varieties, different environment or different ages. Perhaps you can find a better answer in a book on seashore life in your school library.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★



Sea Urchin Inner Case  
or  
Test of Sea Urchin

Kendry of Huntingtower School, Mt. Waverley writes....

We have been studying mould. Do you know if it grows on biennals, annuals or perennials? I think it would be annuals.

ED. Mould is a fungus which will grow wherever suitable conditions exist for the spores to germinate. Darkness and moist air are the main conditions.

What else can you discover about mould? Try growing some yourself on a slice of bread.

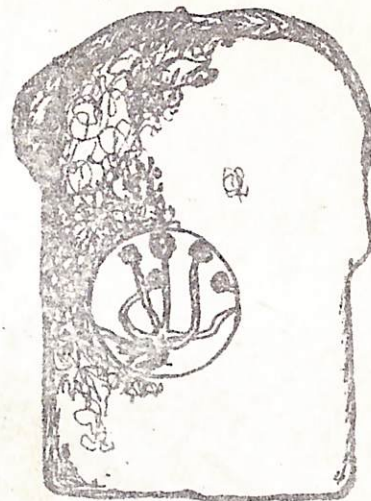
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Girls and Boys,

No doubt you have seen much mention of the Little Desert in the press and on television lately. As you have read, attempts are being made to convert part of this huge area, rich in natural history to pastoral land. I would like to hear your views on this matter. Write and tell me what you think.

Yours sincerely,  
L.J.DELACCA  
Editor.

NEXT ISSUE WILL BE AT DEPOTS ON WEDNESDAY, 17th SEPT.



Rhizopus Mould attacks bread. Inset shows mould enlarged 20 times





BELL MINER  
(BELL BIRD)

CRESCENT  
HONEYEATER

