

# NATURE NOTES

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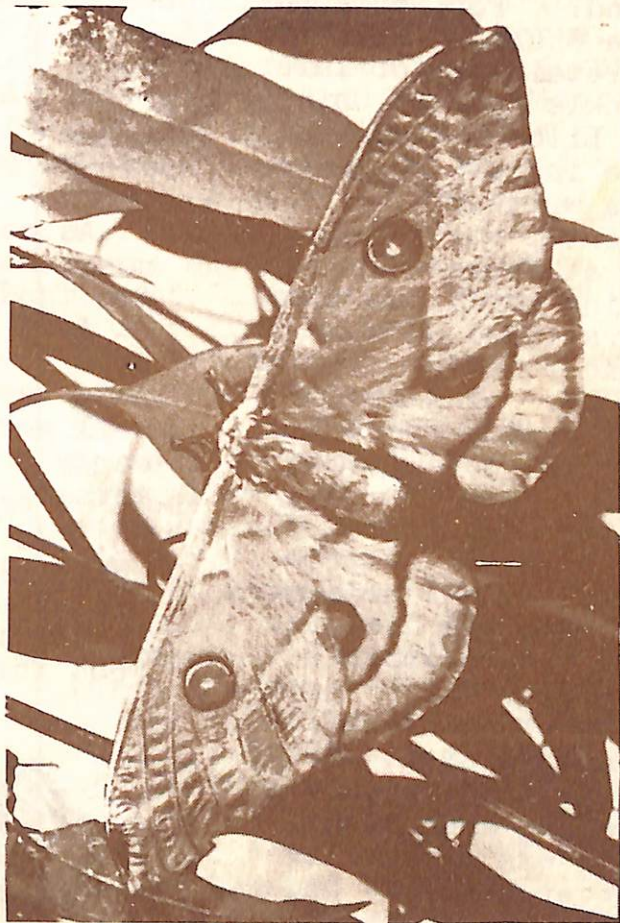


PHOTO 1

GUM EMPEROR MOTH

F.J.C. ROGERS



# ★ PRIZE LETTER

Once again it was most difficult to choose the Prize Letter for the month as several good letters have been received. For September I have chosen the letter from Barbara Sharp of Mirrabooka S.S., and the others I am again retaining for later issues. Barbara wins another Periwinkle by John Child, this time "Australian Pond and Stream Life" a beautifully illustrated 100 page volume of life in our freshwater creeks and ponds. Barbara writes....

Recently our family stayed at Sherbrooke.

Rising early one morning we slipped quietly into the forest. It was very cold. The ground was white with frost and the puddles were frozen into ice.

At the edge of the forest we heard a lyrebird singing and made our way through the forest towards him, stopping often to listen.

We crept on and at last came in sight of the bird, dancing on a mound among some ferns. His tail was spread like a fan over his body and he shook his feathers and turned from side to side as he sang. We watched for about ten minutes while he imitated many birds till some other people disturbed him and he ran off.

As we walked back we saw a hen bird scratching for food quite close to us.

As I am a member of the Bird Lover's Club, I found this very interesting and well worth getting up so early on such a cold morning.

ED. Yes Barbara it was certainly worth the early rising and all this within 30 miles of our G.P.O. Food for thought surely.



Lyrebird

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*From the  
Editor ...*

Dear Girls and Boys,

I hope your vacation was an enjoyable one. Mine certainly was. After all the publicity given recently to the Little Desert, I thought it sounded like a good place to visit, and so it proved to be. The first part of our visit was to the Little Desert National Park near Kiata on the eastern fringe of the Desert. Actually "desert" is not a very fitting name, for although the soil is sandy the area was a veritable garden of wildflowers, but seemingly unsuited to cultivation. We were fortunate here to see the shy mallee fowl or lowan - the same one (Romeo by name) as featured on the A.B.C. school telecasts. Flowering profusely here were blue boronias, zierias, grevilleas, banksias, red prostanthera (mint bush) and many more, beautiful, mallee wildflowers. What a tragedy it would be if any of these species of plants were forever lost to posterity! Much has already been said and done to help save "The Little Desert" but a continuing vigilance must be maintained, for that which is taken by the plough can never be returned.

L.J.DELACCA  
Editor.



Myrtle Wattle is usually only a small shrub from 3 to 6 feet high. The stems may be reddish. Flowerheads may be pale or deep yellow depending on where you find it growing.



*Acacia myrtifolia*



Gum-emperor caterpillar.

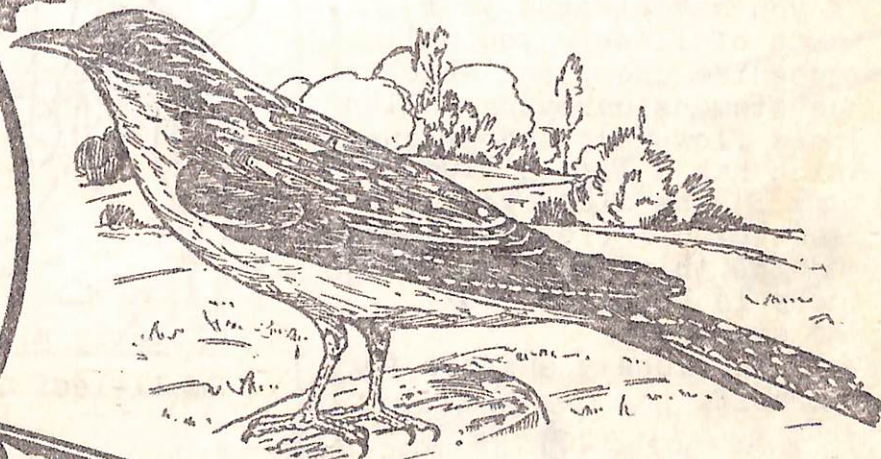
With the coming of spring many insect eggs hatch out and we find many caterpillars and grubs on the leaves and branches of trees.

What is the earliest spring time you have found the gum-emperor moth?

Look for the Sallow Wattle, (*Ac. longifolia*). It usually has bright goldenrod-like flowers and is in brilliant flower this month. We also have two similar wattle in White Sallow Wattle (*Ac. floribunda*) and Narrow-leaf wattle (*Ac. mucronata*). Have you found these?

Watch for him!

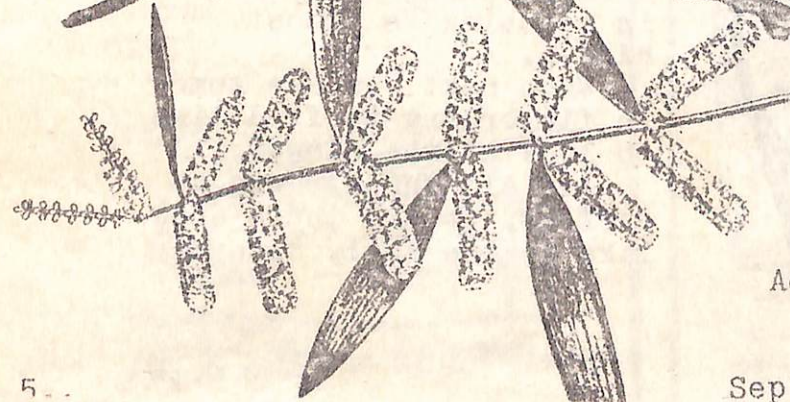
PALLID CUCKOO



During the migrating season keep BIRD CALENDARS.

Such records, kept year by year predict the approximate date of the return of the birds to your area.

*Acacia longifolia*







# In Flower

☉ I wonder how good your observations have been since I mentioned the Early Nancies in June.

Have you found that there seems to be three kinds of Early Nancies? If you have learnt your parts of flowers you will recognise one plant which has stamens carrying pollen (male flowers); one plant which has a little black lump in the middle - the seed box - (female flower); and the third kind is where there is both seed-box and stamens.

Look closely and see for yourself.



Clematis microphylla  
Small-leaf Clematis

★ Small-leaved clematis is in flower, masses of them making it look like the bush or shrub on which it is climbing is almost hidden.

When next you see some in flower try to find time to look at the flowers.

Are all the flowers perfect, or are there some like in the Early Nancy?

anguillaria  
dioica ↗  
Early Nancy



There are not many local Banksias, but if you look you may find some of these beautiful plants.

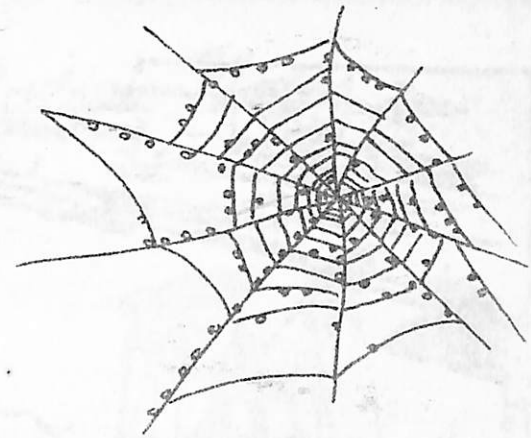
Which kinds can you find? When do they flower?



## The Great OUT-OF-DOORS

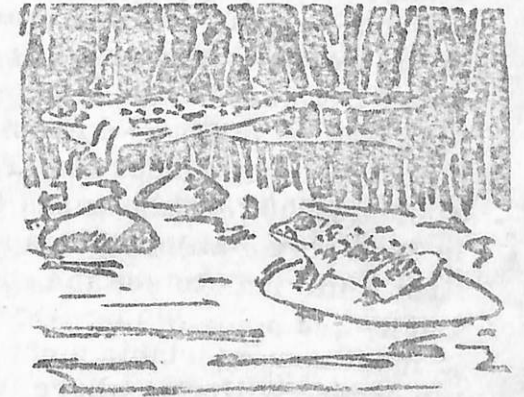


Watch the clouds on a windy day. Did you ever notice that the different layers often appear to travel at different speeds?



Did you ever stop to admire a spider's silken web - perhaps one studded with pearls of dew?

Have you found any frogs yet? You can see from this drawing of a frog in the middle of his leap how long his legs are.







# Springtime Show.. in the GRAMPIANS

\*\*One of the exciting rock formations to be found in the Grampians.

SPRINGTIME: and the plants on the slopes of the Grampian mountains burst forth in a mass of colour. This is the time of the year to visit the Grampians.

Situated about 160 miles west of Melbourne, this mountain range is the western "full-stop" of the Great Dividing Range. Extending for about 50 miles in a north-south direction, the highest peak reaches almost 4,000 feet above sea level. In 1836 Major Mitchell was the first white man to see the range and he and some of his party spent 'a most uncomfortable night' on the top of Mt. William, where it was



snowing.

As you enter the Grampians from Stawell, you arrive at Hall's Gap. This becomes the centre of your activities as you walk (preferably) or drive to the many scenic points, such as The Pinnacle,

## ON TOUR *with Nature Notes*

Sundial Peak, Wonderland,  
McKenzie Falls and  
Elephant's Hide.

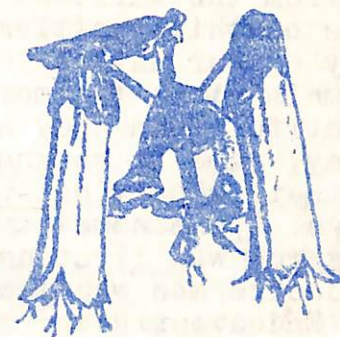
\*\*\*\*\*



Animal life abounds in this area. You should spot several Koalas sleepily perched in the high branches of the eucalypts. In some of the quieter parts of the valleys you should be able to closely observe kangaroos and wallabies.

How many birds can you see? Honeyeaters, parrots, hawks and eagles and, even emus will be spotted by the keen observer.

Remember that all wildlife, both plants and animals, is protected. Do nothing to spoil the beauty of the bush.



This Correa is one of about 600 species of native plants to be found in the area.

Every year, about this time, people from all over Australia come to the Grampians to see the wildflowers which cover the mountainsides.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Grampian Range is an important water catchment area for the Wimmera-Mallee irrigation scheme. (Find the names of six storages in the region.) Water flows north along 6,500 miles of channels to fill dams, tanks and town storages on this huge network. Covering an area of 11,000 square miles, this network serves about 80,000 people.

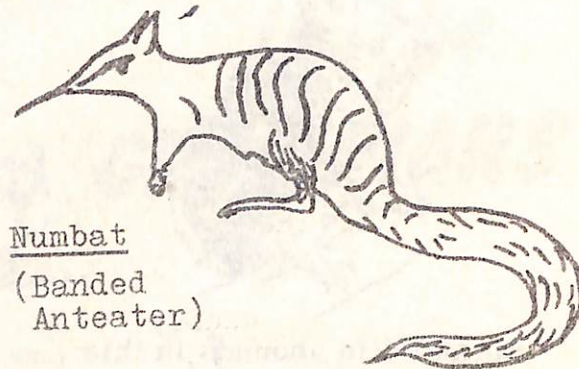


# Aboriginal Names in

★ From the earliest days of white settlement many of our native animals (then far more plentiful than they are today) came to be known by their aboriginal names. The name kangaroo was first used by Cook's men who saw in the Endeavour River area of North Queensland what is now known as the Whiptail Wallaby. The word wallaby was first used in the Sydney district, where the aboriginal word, 'paddymalla' for a small wallaby became in the settlers' mouths the odd name 'paddymelon' (now written 'pademelon' to make it different from the wild prickly fruit of the inland called by that name).

■ Dingo and warrigal were both used for the native dog in the early days, but everyone uses the first of these names now. The 'native bear' is the lovable koala, and the wombat is a comical, friendly fellow that is, unfortunately, treated as a pest by some farmers.

The name numbat sounds similar, but the little animal of that name is very different: the Banded Anteater (not related to the Spiny Anteater or echidna).



Numbat  
(Banded  
Anteater)

■ The quoll is the so-called 'native cat', and the bilby a 'rabbit-bandicoot'. In Troughton's book, 'Furred Animals of Australia', you may find out what kinds of animals are known in W.A. by these aboriginal names:— dalgite, noolbenger, wambenger, mundarda, quenda and wurrupe; also, in Central Aust. the mulgara, and in the Eastern States, the potoroo, bobuck, bettong and tuan.

■ See if you can find some aboriginal names given to snakes and fish, e.g. taipan (snake), wobbecong (small carpet shark).

..10

# Common Use Part 1. FAUNA



Tuan  
(Brush-tailed  
Phascogale)

■ You are sure to think of birds with aboriginal names, such as kookaburra, galah, gang-gang, budgerigar, brilga, lowan, currawong, but you may not know of the corella, quarrion, or wonga pigeon.

Insects are also classed as fauna, so we must not forget witchetty grubs and bogong moths, both of which were favourite foods of the aborigines.

■ The following words are not of aboriginal origin, and a very good dictionary will tell you from what language they came: cockatoo, rosella, emu, cassowary, drongo, jabiru, jacana, bandicoot, goanna, gecko, cuscus, possum, platypus, echidna, barracouta. The languages (not in order) are: Greek, Nth. American Indian, Sth. American Indian (Brazil), Malay, Spanish (from Caribbean), Telugu (Sth. India), Portuguese, Indonesian, English and Malagasy (the language of Madagascar).



Broilga  
(Native Companion)

11..

Sept.'69



# Nesting

Eastern Shrike Tit.

Falcunculus  
frontatus



● Three most useful birds which make their homes around the outer eastern suburbs are the Grey Fantail, Grey Thrush and Eastern Shrike Tit.

● The last-named has often been seen at the Lake School and although widespread is probably not as well known as the first two. This bird with the bright yellow front, and black and white head has a distinctive black crest. He is very popular with apple orchardists because one of his main foods is the codlin moth larvae. His strong hooked bill is used for tearing bark and obtaining food beneath - insects, grubs etc. See if you can discover what makes his nest so unusual. How many eggs does he lay? What of his call?

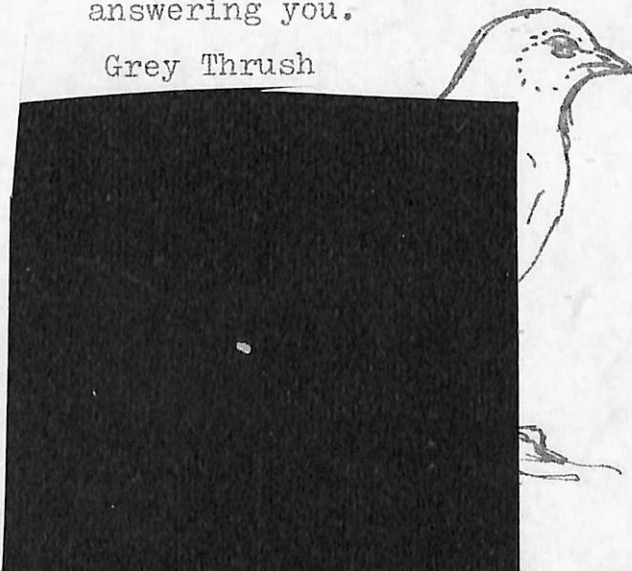
● What a restless, yet graceful bird is the grey fantail! He is also very widespread, being found in all states plus New Zealand, New Guinea and New Caledonia. Find these island in your atlas. He is so restless as to be constantly pivoting about, opening and closing his tail. Can you name his close relative that has the same habits? He spends most of his time catching insects on the wing. Watch him loop the loop, tumbling hither and yon in his quest for food.

## 'Grey and Gold and Friendly' ... ..

Robin Hill likens his nest to a wine glass minus the base - it is made of plant fibres bound with cobwebs. This tiny bird has often been seen around the Blackburn Lake area while I also found several nests at Yellingbo.

● The last member of this useful trio is the grey thrush one of the first songbirds recorded by early settlers who called it the Port Jackson Thrush. This bird is also widespread and doesn't seem to mind living near humans, in fact the bulky cup-shaped nest is often built near buildings. His is not a showy plumage but his call is one of the most melodious of all our songsters. If you hear it, try repeating it and almost surely the bird will continue answering you.

Grey Thrush



Grey Fantail

Rhipidura faliginosa

● Find out more about his food and his nest. You may do this by quiet observation as he is not really a shy bird. Cayley, Hill and Leach will tell you more about these birds but remember the best studies are made by personal observations. Don't forget to record what you see. You may discover some hitherto unknown scientific facts.



# Drop a Line



To Drop a Line this month comes Neil Anderson Grade 6 of Ringwood who writes .....

In my friends back-yard is a tall Eucalyptus and quite often we notice Gang-Gang Cockatoos, Noisy Friar Birds and several different species of parrots and lorikeets.

ED. Yes Neil, it is amazing to discover such a variety of bird life so close to the city. Why not compile a bird calendar and list birds seen and when seen, plus arrival and departure time of migrants?



Gang-Gang  
Cockatoo

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

From Janene Howard,  
S.D.A. School Nunawading  
comes this interesting  
observation.

As we were going home one day we saw about ten birds which I think were plovers walking around in some soggy water. I live at Mt. Waverley and we saw them in a lot of bush. They had an orange and yellow beak, the same colour for their legs, grey around the eye and head and white stomach and grey wings. Could you try to positively identify them please?



ED. Your bird pictured on previous page Janene was either a Spur-winged Plover or Banded Plover (very similar). Watch out for this "dive bomber" if you get too close to her nest! Why do you think she is often called "The Alarm Bird"?

\* \* \* \* \*

Debra Gertzel of Surrey Hills S.S. writes....

While I was living in Tasmania my friends caught two tiger snakes, a male and a female. One was a shiny black and the other a yellow brown. Is this difference in colour due to the different sex?

ED. The difference in colour in the same kind of snake Debra is often caused by different environment. In this case perhaps one of the snakes had lived for some time in a different area or as you suggest maybe the difference was due to sex. It may be that just as humans and many animals in the same species vary in colour, so may snakes. Why not write to the Education Officer, National Museum, Russell Street, Melbourne, and

find out which theory, if any is correct?

\* \* \* \* \*

Catherine Hughes, Harkaway, Mansfield, writes...

I would like you to tell me the name of a city bird. It is black, with yellow-orange eyes and beak and it is about as big as a thrush. I live in the country so I don't know the names of city birds, so I would be most grateful if you wrote and told me.

ED. Good to hear from you Catherine as we do not get many letters from the country. Your bird was a Male Blackbird an import from Europe in the 1860s. We city dwellers may not do too well at identifying some of your Mansfield birds either, so don't worry about not knowing his name.

Male  
Blackbird.





## QUIZ

1. . . . . CREEK IS THE NAME OF A FISH HATCHERY.  
(VOL.6, NO. 4, PAGE 7)
2. TOWER HILL IS A LANDMARK BETWEEN . . . . . AND  
. . . . .  
(VOL.6, NO. 1, PAGE 7)
3. QUOLL IS THE ABORIGINAL NAME FOR THE . . . . .  
(VOL.6, NO. 1, PAGE 8)
4. THE SHARK HAS A SKELETON OF . . . . .  
(VOL.6, NO. 1, PAGE 11)
5. BOLETUS IS A TYPE OF . . . . .  
(VOL.6, NO. 2, PAGE 4)
6. A "PAINTED LADY" IS A . . . . .  
(VOL.6, NO. 2, PAGE 10)
7. THE STIGMA IS PART OF A . . . . .  
(VOL.6, NO. 4, PAGE 5)
8. MENURA IS THE ABORIGINAL NAME FOR THE . . . . .  
(VOL.6, NO. 4, PAGE 8)

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NEXT ISSUE WILL BE AT DEPOTS ON WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 1st

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