NATURE NOTES

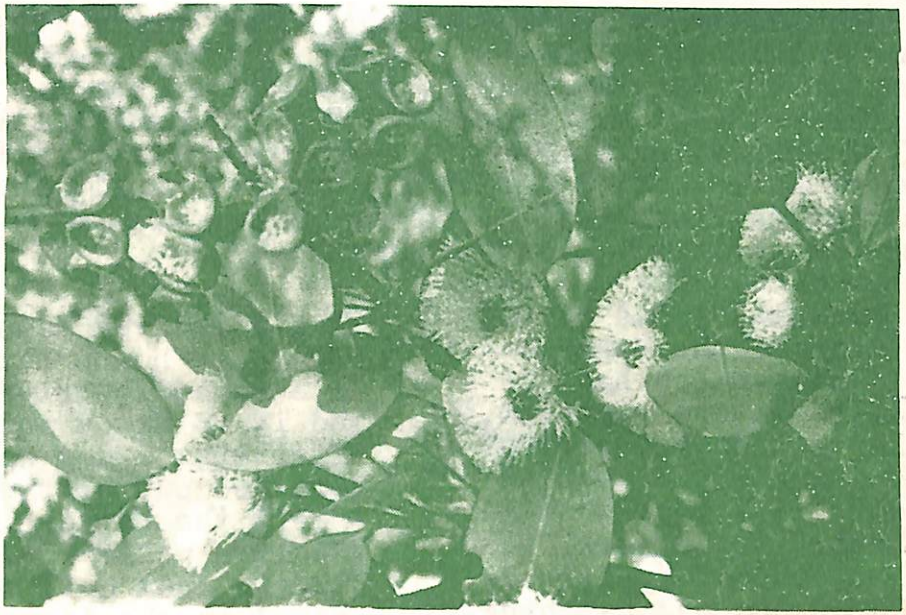


Photo F.J.C. Rogers

JULY 1970

Eucalyptus preissiana (Bell-fruited mallee from W.A.)
Large yellow flowers; Height of tree 6' - 10'.

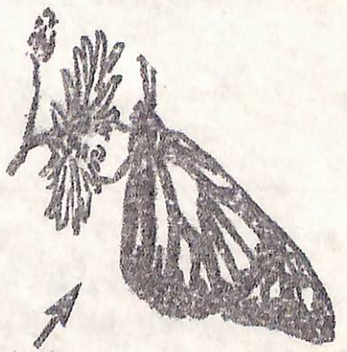
Ringwood Inspectorate vol 7 no 5 1970 · 5c.
Registered at the GPO, Melbourne for transmission by post as a periodical

PRIZELETTER

Prizeletter time is here again and once more it was most difficult to make a choice. After careful consideration our July Periwinkle goes to Owen Maroney of Middlefield Primary School for the intriguing story of the Wandering Monarch. Owen wins "Australian Desert Life" by Keith Davey, a new Periwinkle from Landsdowne Press with 56 colour photographs - a welcome addition to any school library.

Recently I had caterpillars of the Monarch butterfly which had changed into crysalises. Most of them hatched but unfortunately a couple didn't. I took them to school. While working at school one of my friends told me one was hatching. I took the butterfly and hung it in the sun. At the end of the day I tried to let it fly but it couldn't. I took it home and fed it on honey and water, but it wouldn't eat. The next day it ate a lot. Now it is tame and it will stay with me wherever I go.

Today I rode on my bike to the other side of Blackburn with the butterfly on my jumper. It stayed on my jumper till I arrived home a couple of hours later. As soon as I arrived I fed it on honey and water. After that I dug some potatoes out of the garden. I left the butterfly on the lawn while I was digging them out. It stayed on the lawn till I picked it up after doing the digging. That is my story about my Wanderer.



Wanderer Butterfly.

CONTENTS

Produced by the Nature Notes Committee of Ringwood Inspectorate

A Timely Message.

Dear Girls and Boys,

I suppose you have noticed that at this time of the year it is "sleeping time" for Nature.

Everyone and everything needs a period of rest to regain strength for the days ahead.

Have you observed how many different ways there are that "Nature" can sleep?

Perhaps you would like to make a list of these and show it to your teacher. This could become a topic for discussion in your new approach to Science.

You know this different way of looking at Science in our Schools today can be the most exciting adventure that has ever happened. We all admire adventurers and enjoy reading about them. You, too, can become an "adventurer" following the pathway of observation into the ever unfolding wonderland of Nature.

Let your eyes be your telescope and your ears be the "sonar system" that will lead you to uncover the most exciting things.

Good luck to you in your "adventuring".

H.G.OSBORN
Principal
Blackburn Lake Primary School

July '70.

Things to Look for

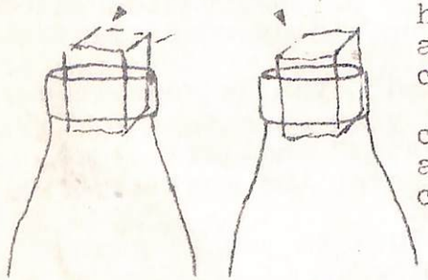
Ice Cubes

Even during very dry periods - winter included, the eucalypts cause moisture in the air to precipitate. One week-end in June several years ago, I was camped in the Little Desert. Although there had been little rain for some months the Mallee trees were dripping water from their leaves each morning. In fact there were puddles under certain trees because of the water that had condensed on the leaves and dripped to the ground.

RAIN is condensed water vapour which falls from the clouds.

SNOW is a form of water droplets frozen into ice crystals of different hexagonal shapes. Falling snow may be individual crystals or several in a mass.

Other forms of precipitation include sleet, hail, dew and frost. How and what causes these?



Cold Water. Hot Water.

Partly fill a milk bottle with hot water. Empty all but about an inch of water. Place an ice-cube in the mouth of the bottle.

Fill another milk bottle with cold water. Empty all but about an inch of water. Place an ice-cube in the mouth of the bottle.

In which bottle does a fog form?

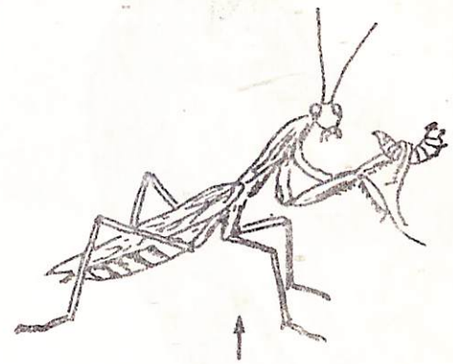
Where do we find fog - along rivers?, along highways?, in valleys?.

in JULY

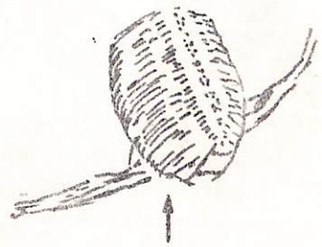
The green praying mantis is common in our gardens. It is also found in many overseas countries, and I have not been able to find out if it is an Australian insect or whether it was brought here from other countries.

Do you know why the word "praying" is used? I guess we could almost use the word "preying" too because this insect preys on other insects - particularly bees. The word mantid is sometimes used too. I have often seen them hiding on a flower waiting ready to grab any unwary insect which pays a visit.

The fore-legs are well adapted for holding their prey as there are many spines which interlock and hold the trapped insect until it is eaten.



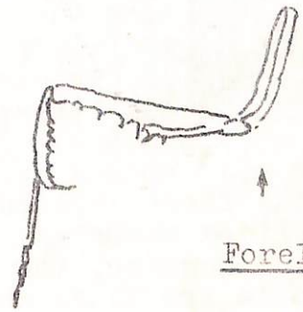
Green Mantis.



Egg Case.

We often see the egg-case, but do we recognise it? It is hard and brown and often attached to fence posts where it soon blends with its background.

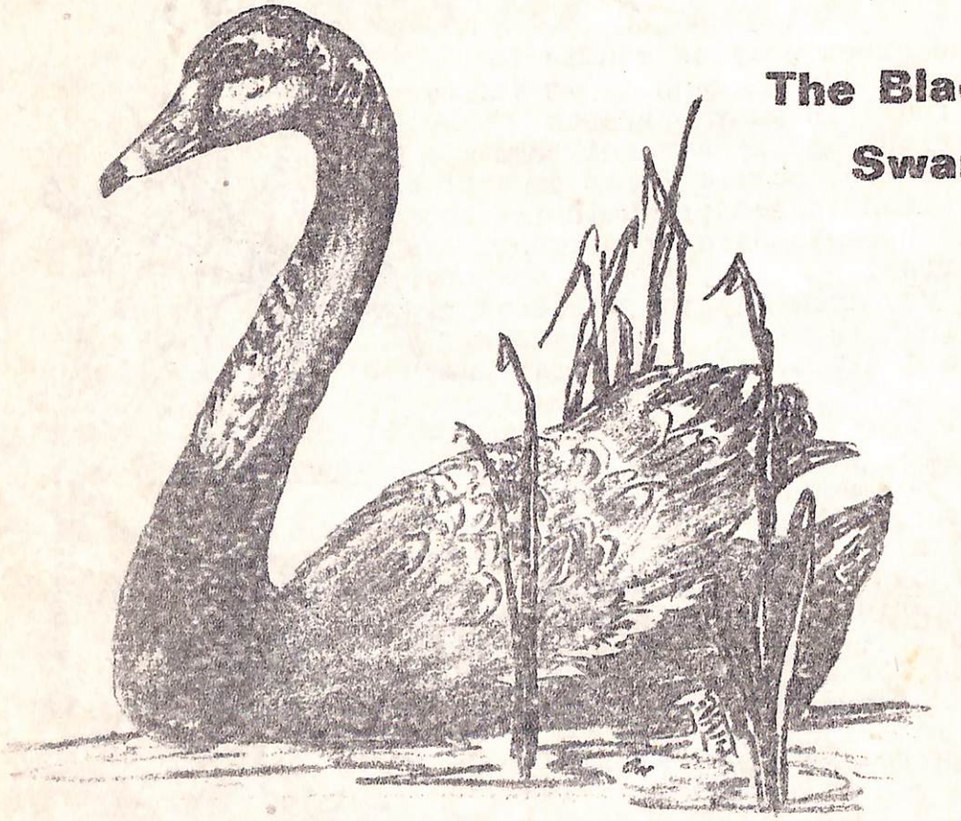
There is a large brown relation which we may see also. But there are many others too. Watch these creatures and see what they do.



Foreleg.

THERE'S A STORY IN A STAMP

The Black Swan

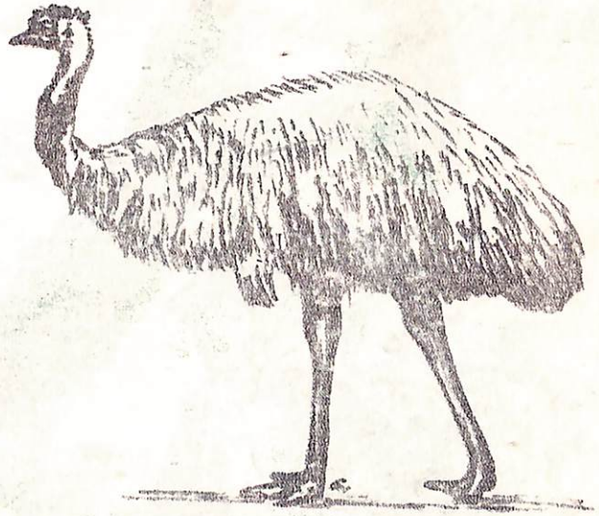


Issued in 1929 to mark the centenary of West. Australia.

This stamp was issued on 2nd. August, 1954 to mark the centenary of Western Australia's first stamp.

When the first explorers saw the Black Swan they could not believe their eyes. The only swans they knew were white. However, the only white swans to be found in Australia are those which have been brought into the country.

Issued, with other stamps between 1942 and 1944.



The Emu

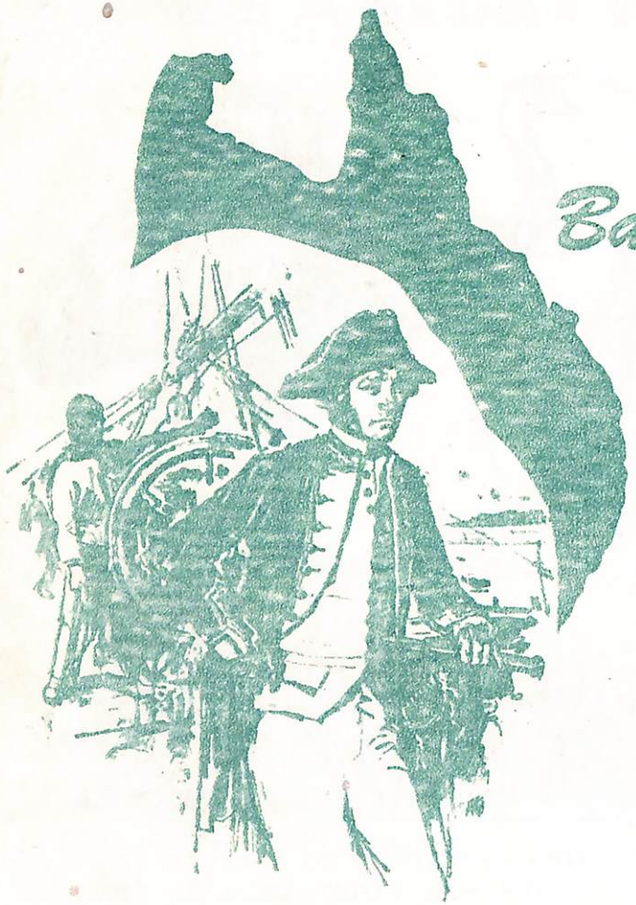
The scientific name of the Emu - Dromaius Novae - hollandiae - means "swift-footed bird of New Holland". This is true for this large bird can run very rapidly; in bursts between 30 and 40 miles per hour. When cornered this bird can deliver a hefty kick, capable of breaking a man's leg.

The Emu can be found in most areas of Australia, but it is extinct in Tasmania and other islands in Bass Strait.

In their natural habitat these large birds are quite harmless but in farm areas they can be destructive. I have seen a large area of an oat crop stripped of grain by these birds. By placing the stalk between their beaks they pull upwards, tearing the grain from the stalk. They only gather the last few grains. One farmer said, "If they ate all the grain they stripped they would only damage about a quarter of my crop!"

Did you know that Mr. Emu hatches the 7 to 15 large eggs?

The Great Barrier Reef



When Captain Cook's ship "Endeavour" struck a reef in the area we now know as the Great Barrier Reef, did he realise the extent and beauty of this under-water wonderland. He probably did not!

Australian and over-seas tourists now make this a popular holiday resort. But the Great Barrier Reef is now in danger of destruction because of an ugly-looking starfish with an appetite which seemingly has no end.

By eating the coral polyps on which life in the Great Barrier Reef depends, the CROWN OF THORNS STARFISH is rapidly destroying large areas of these little animals. The coral polyp makes a "tiny" tube in which it lives. During the day it withdraws inside the tube, coming out at night when it traps passing food in its waving fan-like arms. As the years pass, these tubes build up a reef forming a home for countless creatures - fish, anenomes, worms, starfish, crabs and eels.

The Crown of Thorns Starfish

Here lies a victim of man's thoughtlessness .....

This is an empty Trumpet Shell; the animal which once lived inside was killed because someone wanted the beautiful shell.

A CROWN OF THORNS STARFISH

ATTACKS ITS FAVOURITE FOOD -

the polyps of the STAG CORAL.

By eating the coral polyps the Crown-of-Thorns is rapidly killing the animals on which the reef is built. The star-fish actually turns its stomach out and sucks up the soft-bodied polyps. Thous-ands of starfish have invaded some reefs leaving them almost completely barren.

Scientists are studying ways of controlling these creatures to prevent the destruction of more of the reef. They are experimenting with methods of natural control, such as increasing the numbers of Triton and Trumpet Shells and introducing the Painted Shrimp which already exists in small numbers in some areas of the reef. These shrimps can eat a Crown-of-Thorns Starfish in about two hours.

What Is A Magnet?

Find out what sort of materials a magnet attracts.

For Example, tick the following objects which would react to a magnet: Paper, Drawing Pin, Fork, Bottle Top, Key, Silver Paper, Wood, Needle, Cotton, Saucer, Paper Clip, Wool, Plastic.

Draw Some Different Shaped Magnets -

Magnets

Have You Ever Played With Magnets?

1. Can you do this with two Bar Magnets - What causes the magnet to balance in the air I wonder!

2. How many pins can you attract in a line? (My record is five!)

WHAT ABOUT MAKING YOUR OWN MAGNETS!

If you have any bright ideas please let me know and we will pass your ideas on to other girls and boys .....

An Experiment For You To Try

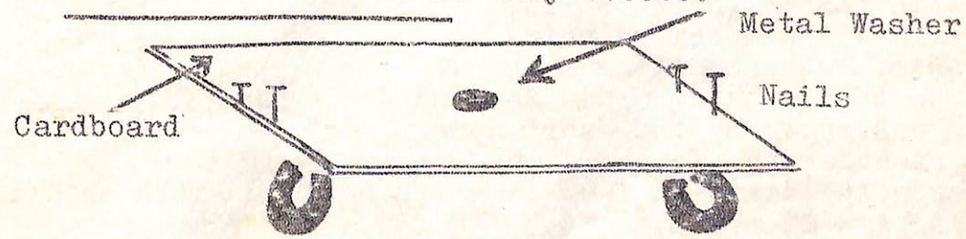
You Need : 1 Horeshoe Magnet
1 Piece of Paper
Some Iron Filings (You could probably get these from a Garage).

NOW : Place the paper over the horseshoe Magnet and lightly sprinkle the iron filings over the paper.

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE?

Sometimes Magnets can attract through other materials - paper, material, wood (?) and so on.

Here Is A Game For You To Play .....

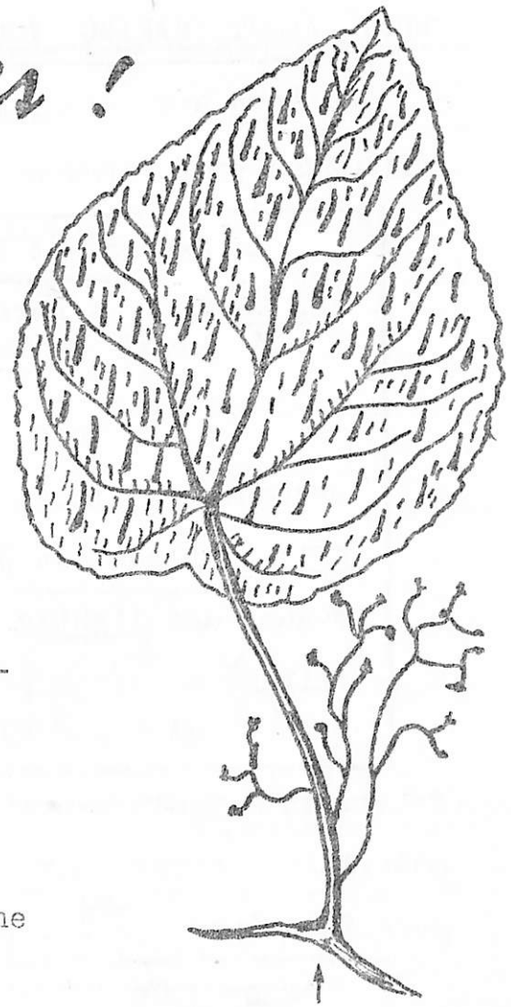


RULES ; This is a game for 2 people, each who holds a magnet close under a piece of cardboard. See who can score the most goals by attracting the metal washer through the nails. GOOD SCORING!

Stinging Trees !

Have you ever been stung by nettles when playing in the grass? Perhaps you may not be willing to test the old verse that said:

'Tender-hearted stroke a nettle,
And it stings you for your pains;
Grasp it like a man of mettle,
And it soft as silk remains'.



Gympie
(Dendrocnide moroides)

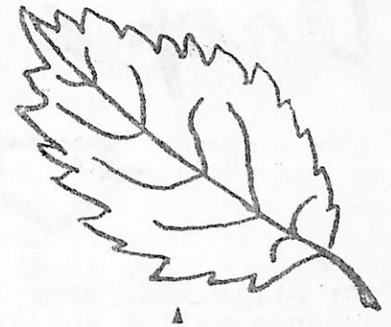
The common stinging nettle is Urtica dioica a weed introduced from England, as was the small or dwarf nettle (U. urens). We have in Victoria a native species, the scrub nettle (U. incisa), a perennial plant found along forest tracks.

There are 550 species of the nettle family in the world, nearly all of them stinging plants, but some sting much worse than others. New Zealand has one known by the Maori name 'onga-onga' (U. ferox), which caused the death in 1961 of a youth stung while shooting wild pigs at night.

Australia's three poisonous species are tree nettles of the genus Dendrocnide (formerly Laportea) which are found in tropical and sub-tropical rain-forests of Queensland and New South Wales. If you have visited the Gold Coast, you may have gone up to Lamington National Park in the McPherson Ranges, where they can be seen along the road to Binna Burra.

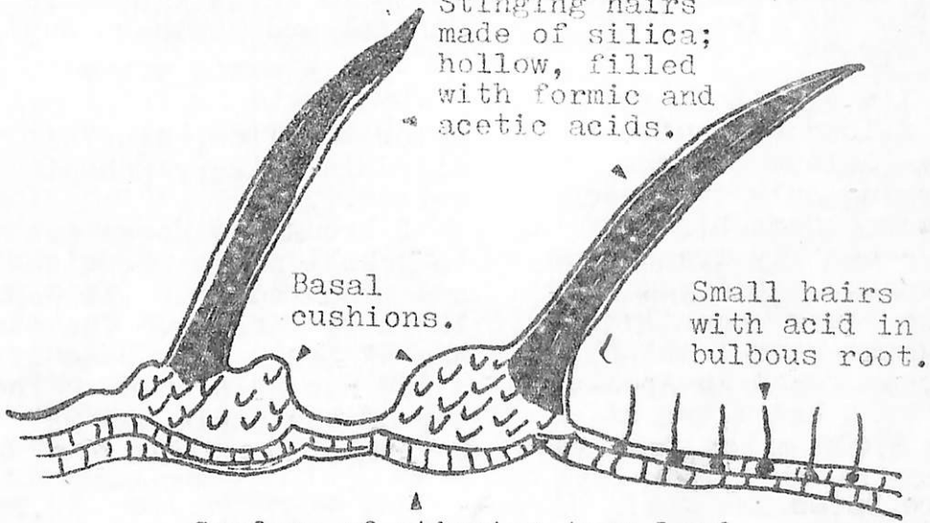
Giant Stinging Tree (D. excelsa) reaches a height of over 100 feet, and ranges from the Bunya Mountains in Qld. as far as Kiama on N.S.W.'s south coast.

Shiny-leaved Stinging Tree (D. photiniphylla) is a smaller tree, found from Atherton Tableland (N.Q.) to Illawarra (N.S.W.)



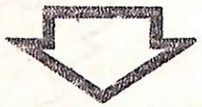
Leaf of Common Nettle
(Urtica dioica)

Gympie, or Gympie Bush (D. moroides) is a shrub with mulberry-like leaves covered with stinging hairs that are of two kinds: large hollow spines full of formic acid, acetic acid and other toxic chemicals, and smaller hairs that have a bulb of poison at the base. In the early days horses were reported to have been killed by this species, and there are written accounts of the intense agony it causes, the pain lasting for months. It is found from Cairns to Grafton, and its aboriginal name was given to the town of Gympie, famous last century for its gold. A specimen planted in Sydney Botanic Gardens had to be removed because of the misuse of the leaves by naughty boys!



Surface of stinging tree leaf.

Drop a Line



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

Dear Girls and Boys, last month I asked for your thoughts on Conservation and/or Pollution. I was very pleased to receive several excellent essays from Surrey Hills which I intend to print in our special issue next month. If you haven't sent your story in yet don't delay if you wish to have it in the Nature Notes special.

Our first letter for Drop a Line this month comes from Janet Songdahl who forgot to mention the name of her school.

One Friday last month my budgerigar Sonny flew away. On the following Monday one of my friends at school had found the bird. Her house is about five blocks away from mine. She said a bird (budgerigar) could not fly that far. Is this true?

ED. I'm afraid Janet your friend was quite wrong (unless she was referring only to caged birds). Some birds of course can fly tremendous distances. Did you read in the paper recently of the giant petrel which had been found in Apollo Bay. It had flown at least 8,000 miles from the South Orkney Islands near South America. This is an important thing we learn from bird banding for the petrel had been banded last March. Budgerigars can also fly fairly long distances but of course inland only. They are found in the wild state in large flocks in Central and Northern Australia.

* * * * * * * * *

Peter Hamilton, Age 7 of Lilydale Primary School writes...

I brought a Horse mushroom to school where we weighed and measured it. It was 12" x 9½" across. The stalk was 6" long. The base of the stalk was 8" around. The top of the stalk was 9½" around. The gills were 4"

wide. The circumference was 34". It weighed 1 lb. 15½ oz.

ED. An excellent letter for a 7 year old Peter. It shows good observation and shows how you were able to tie in some applied maths with your science. Did you find any difference (apart from size) between a horse mushroom and an ordinary one?

* * * * * * * * *

Christine Thomson of Grade 4 Forest Hill P.S. tells of an interesting experience with a sulphur crested cockatoo.

Last Saturaday when doing homework, Dad came in and said that there was a cockatoo on the garage roof. We crept outside but it had flown to a nearby tree. We tried to tempt him with a biscuit, but he wouldn't come. The boys went back inside, but I stayed to watch. Dad went down to the backyard and the cocky and I followed. Dad said to bring the biscuit. The cocky sat on the car roof. We put the biscuit near him. He came to it and ate it using his claw to hold it. He flew off and we haven't seen him since. He was white with a yellow plume.

ED. Your cockatoo was most likely a "tame" one which had escaped. Where would you see these birds in their wild state? Are they protected? Can you make a list of the many different uses that birds find for their feet?

* * * * * * * * *

Dana O'Neill of East Ringwood writes...

During the May holidays I found a gum leaf, on it were tiny eggs. The eggs were mustard yellow. The gum leaf was red, green but mostly brown.

Could you please tell me what kind of eggs they are?

ED. From your description and drawings Dana it would seem that the 'eggs' are either moth eggs (probably Gum Emperor or Cup Moth) or they could be lumps caused by the gall insect. The moths lay their eggs in a regular pattern while the galls are set out in a more irregular manner.

* * * * * * * *

Keep your letters coming in girls and boys.

July '70.

NATURE'S ENGINEERS

Here are some more of Nature' s inventions.
List how many has copied them for his own use.

Sound echoes of the Bat

.....

.....

Camouflage

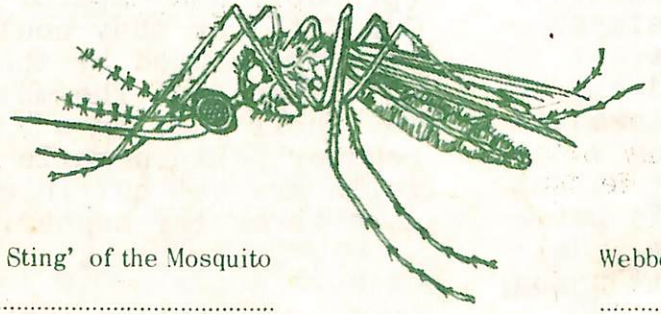
.....

.....

Wind blown seeds

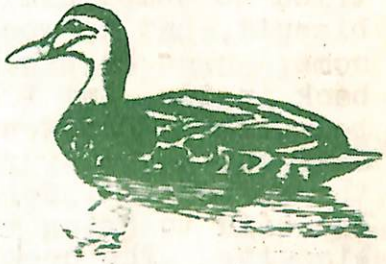
.....

.....



' Sting' of the Mosquito

.....



Webbed feet of the water birds

.....

NEXT ISSUE will be at Depots on WEDNESDAY AUGUST 5th.