

NATURE NOTES



Photo: F.J.C. Rogers

BROWN GOSHAWK – One of the fiercest of Australia's diurnal birds of prey. The one pictured was 'captured' at Croydon and later released.

OCT
1970

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★ PRIZE LETTER ★

Stephen Blackburn of Lower Plenty another student of Marcellin College wins this month's Periwinkle "Australian Seashore Life" by John Child. This excellent pocket manual describes the main types of marine life. It contains many full colour and black and white plates. Value plus at \$1.50. Stephen writes.....

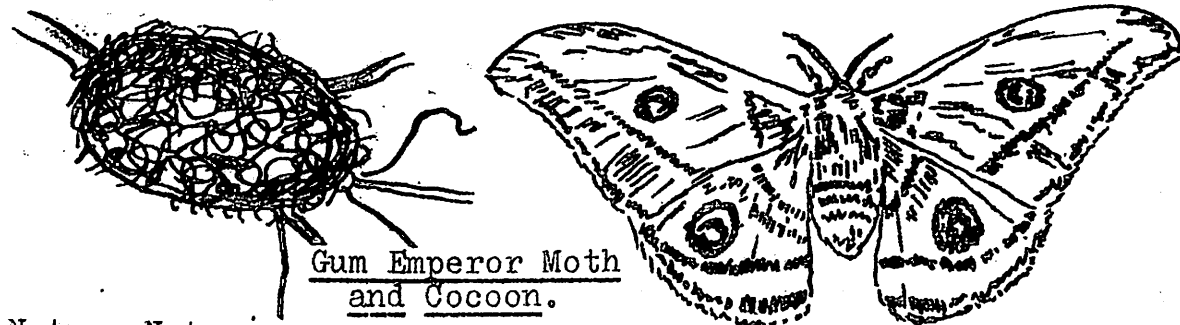
In mid-June, I found a fat green caterpillar, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ " long. I recognized it as a Gum Emperor. It was a cold day so I thought it wanted some warmth. I put it in a shoe box with holes in for air, in the garage overnight. Next morning I rushed out to see the Gum Emperor. Instead of a caterpillar, there was a cocoon. I looked at it very carefully and I saw the Gum Emperor busily finishing its cocoon. The cocoon is very small and a brownish-grey colour. It is very light in weight and I shall leave it

on a saucer outside where it cannot be blown away. I think the moth will emerge from its cocoon in December. When it does, it will be a beautiful Gum Emperor Moth with big, colourful wings. Ed.

Watching insect life-cycles is always interesting and rewarding.

You will discover more about your 'moth that is an emperor' in 'Wonderland of Nature' by Nuri Mass.

Write and tell me of your moth after its emergence. Have you kept a diary, showing the times of the various stages?



Dear Girls and Boys,

If you listen intently you will probably be surprised to note the variety, the range, and the quality of our birds' songs in October which is "Bird Month".

Although most birds are with us all through the year, it is in the springtime that they seem to voice their appreciation of the warmer days and the blossom-scented air. At the first suggestion of daylight they pour out their happy songs; and in the peace and stillness of dusk, some of them are still in song. For them springtime is the mating season; and, no doubt, as nature lovers, you have enjoyed watching them as they gather materials for their nests, work tirelessly seeking food for their babies, and show great courage in driving off real or suspected enemies.

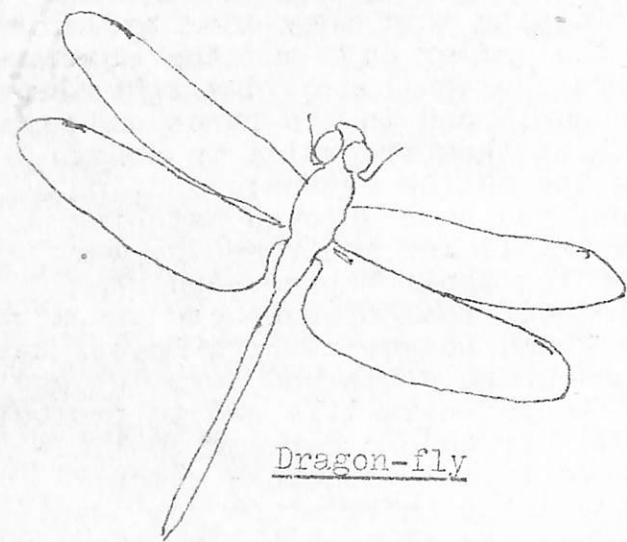
For many years the Gould League of Bird Lovers has worked tirelessly to encourage girls and boys to take a more active interest in our bird life and to protect our native birds, and to persuade others to do likewise. Perhaps you would like to become a member? Your teacher will give you the information you need. The Gould League which has its office at the Alamein Primary School, P.O. Box 96, Ashburton, 3147, telephone 25.8001, has just published a booklet "Birds of Victoria - Urban Areas" which will help you to identify readily birds in your locality. I hope that you will make October "Bird Month" and that your interest in our birds will grow and give you all untold pleasure now and in the days ahead.

W.H.CUMMING
President, Gould League of Bird Lovers..

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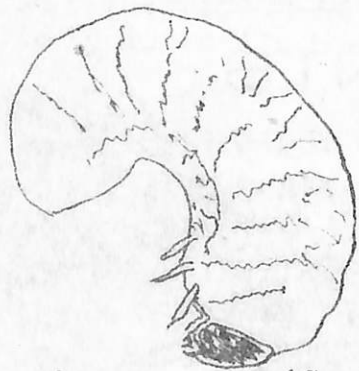
Things to Look for



Dragon-fly



Damsel-fly



'Curl' Grub

What do you know about dragon-flies?

Do not kill these useful insects as among their food are mosquitoes.

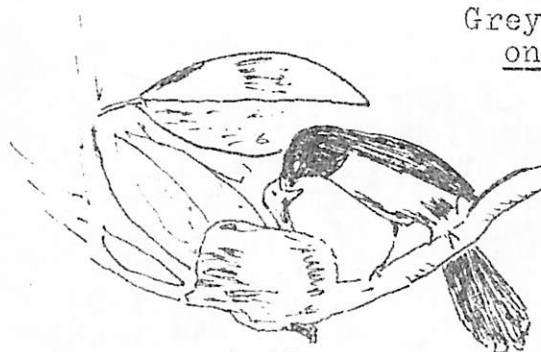
I have not drawn all the fine lines in their wings, but if you manage to have a close look at the pattern that these lines make, try to draw them in yourself. Can you find some patterns that are different? Use your hand lens to look at this insect - particularly the compound eyes.

Can you tell the difference between a dragon-fly and a damsel fly?

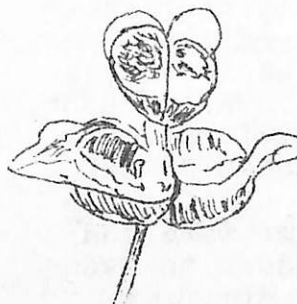
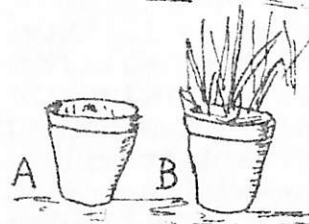
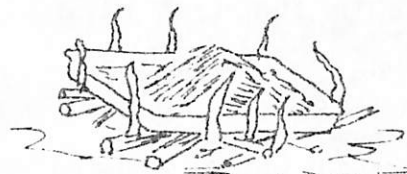
If you have been digging in the garden you may have dug up a "curl-grub". These grubs are the larvae of cockchafer beetles and feed upon the roots of grass and shrubs or decaying vegetable matter.

By watching magpies on the lawn or in a paddock you may see them listening for the grubs making a noise in the ground and then see them use their strong beak to dig them out and eat them.

OCTOBER



Willy-wagtail at nest.



Gall

Grey Fantail on nest.

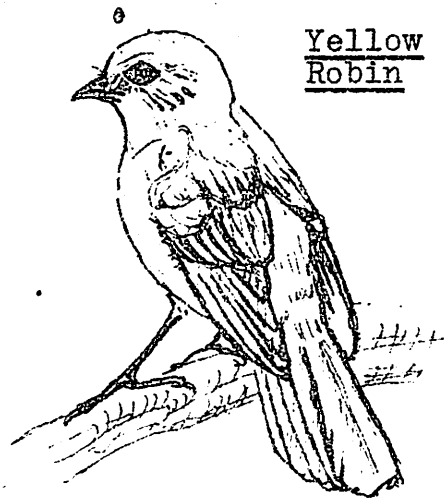


Grey fantail's nest is easy to tell with a small "tail" under the branch. The nest is made of cobwebs woven together.

Take some soil, fill one pot with some of it, take sufficient soil to fill the other pot and heat it over a fire in a tray. Allow it to cool, and then fill the other pot. Sow seeds of wheat, or oats etc in both pots and treat them the same with watering and sunlight. Which drawing A or B represents the soil that was heated?

Many plants develop galls when irritated by insects which have laid eggs in their leaves, flowers, stems etc. The gall produced provides food and shelter for the developing insect. Insects cause the plant to develop their own particular shape. What shaped galls do you find? Look on Eucalypts and Wattles in particular.

Builders at Mount



Yellow
Robin

I am a terrace spy who likes to lounge in the sun on the garden terrace reporting back to you the mysterious movements of various bird bodies that orbit around the tea-tree down here at Mount Martha. (A previous article told you about the "acrobats" at my place.) Now that it is the month of October, it is natural for things to spring into action. See that yellow robin over there? He is very busy building a nest in a low fork in a large, bent-over tea-tree, tearing off narrow strips of bark from trunks, carrying them up into the building lot and press-

ing them down into a cup foundation that is gradually growing in size. From the under-carriage of the garden table trolley, he picks up a few strands of a spider's web to use as binding or reinforcement on the bark nest. Often he does not fly direct to the nest with his "load of timber"; but creates a diversion by landing on a branch a few feet away. I can't tell whether or not his mate is in this building job as builder's labourer. I notice the firetails are now courting in pairs, so they will be soon on nesting operations, too.

The yellow robin completes the construction of the family nest in a week or so and then Mrs. Robin begins her long squat. After some three weeks, I notice that she stands on the brim of the nest, takes food from her mate and then bends down to feed the young birds just hatched out.

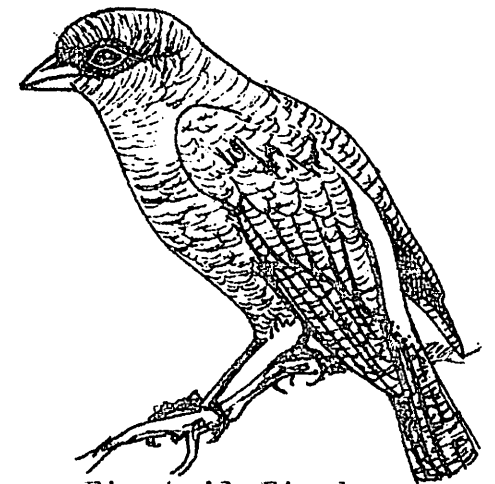
Martha.

Mr. Yellow Robin has been very busy shuttling to and fro with tasty morsels, mostly worms and grubs, for Mrs. Yellow Robin who has a spell from her duties while he removes droppings from the nest and dumps them on an old tea-tree stump some distance away. The young robins are chirping clearly now and their beaks can be seen thrust upwards for the tidbits from Mrs. Robin.

How many birds are hatched? Three, and it wasn't long before they had grown sufficiently to leave the nest and perch on a nearby branch to be fed by Mrs. Robin. Once I climbed on a table to take a photograph of the fledglings in the nest, during the temporary absence of the mother bird, of course. Immediately, she was on the ground below, putting on the "injured" bird act to distract my attention from the nest. She flopped on the grass with wings outspread, skidding along a foot or so, hopping another

yard and flopping down again. (Have you ever seen a wild mountain duck doing this act of diversion to lure you away from her brood?) It is a marvellous act - a clever show of devotion, self-sacrifice and cunning.

The job of raising a young, feathered family is now complete. I owe a debt to the parent birds for nesting so close to us. Next to gardening and bowls, bird-watching is most rewarding. I hope you will do more bird-watching for the pleasure it brings.



Firetail Finch
(Beautiful Firetail)

EUCALYPTS

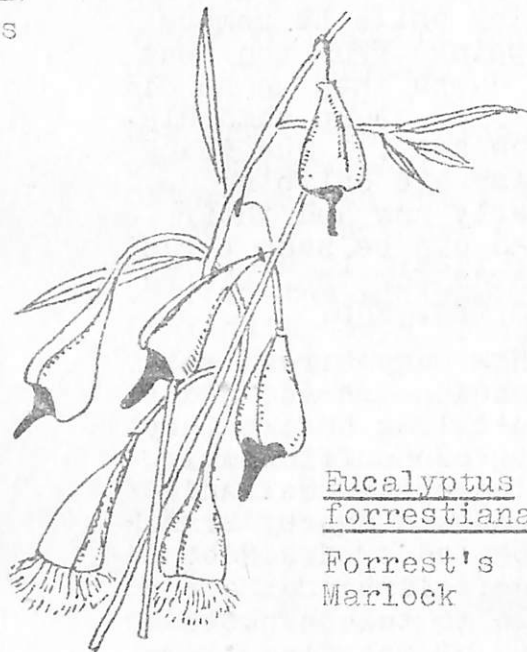
Which of these Eucalypts
you recognise and what
you know about them?
To which of these did
late C.A.Gardner write
January, 1954
"For the want of a
good descriptive
name I use Gungunnu -
the name used by the
aborigines of the
Fraser Range district."

EUCALYPTS

By Stan Kelly.

Here is a wonderful
about our Eucalypts.
right are copies of
of Mr. Stan Kelly's
paintings. You will
many interesting
gs about these trees
if you enjoy it, I'm
you will wish to
some in your gardens.

Price of this book
Published by Nelson's
\$2.00.



Eucalyptus
forrestiana

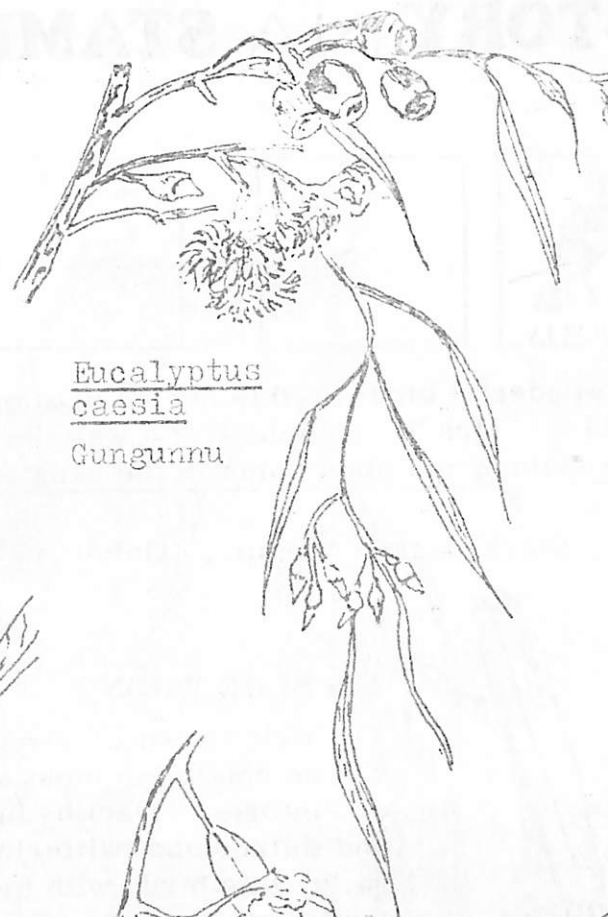
Forrest's
Marlock



Eucalyptus megacornuta
Warty Yate



Eucalyptus globulus
Blue Gum



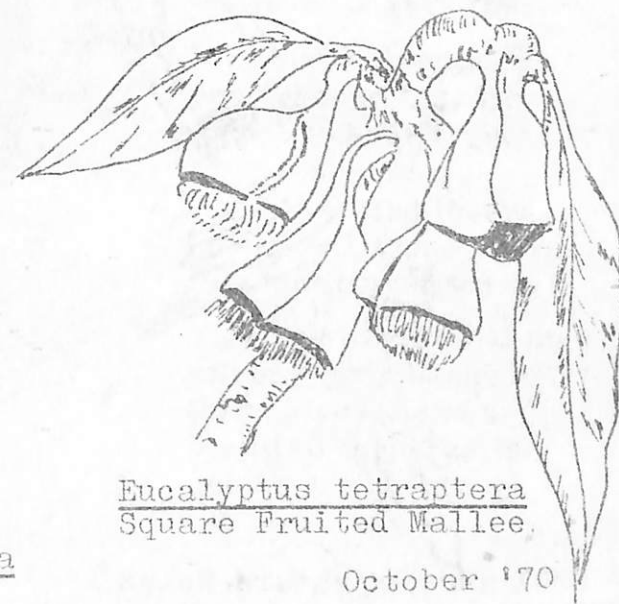
Eucalyptus
caesia
Gungunnu



Eucalyptus torquata
Coral Gum

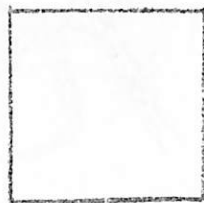
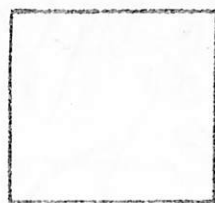
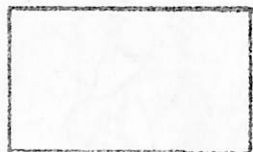


Eucalyptus macrocarpa
Mottlecak



Eucalyptus tetraptera
Square Fruited Mallee

THERE'S A STORY IN A STAMP



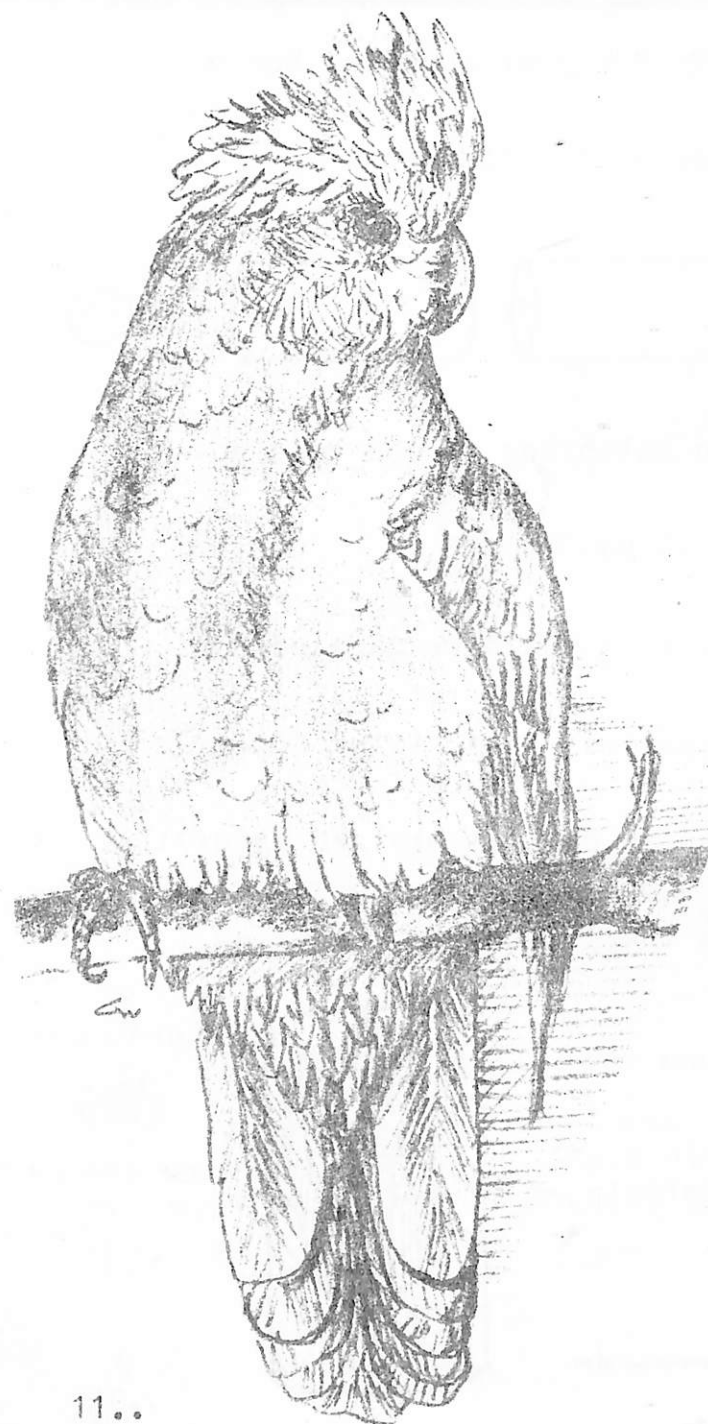
To show off some of our wonderful bird life this series of stamps was issued in March, 1964 . Mrs T Temple-Watts was the designer. Collect these stamps and place them in the gaps above. Birds depicted were:

Yellow-tailed Thornbill .. Black-backed Magpie .. Galah .. Wren



The BLUE WREN

The well known Blue Wren can be spotted in most areas of Victoria. Darting hither and thither and twittering gaily, this bird, with his family, lives in scrub and low bushes . Sometimes you will be able to hear the Blue Wren singing at night. Never still, these birds spend their time searching for food - insects and other morsels. The birds in the family are very "close". More than one brood is reared each season and the young birds of an earlier brood often help in the feeding of the latest arrivals!



The GALAH

This famous bird will be found in open country in pairs or large flocks.

Although regarded as a pest by farmers because they root-up his freshly planted seed, the galah eats the seeds of many noxious plants.

The bird was first described in 1817 when one was sent to the Paris Museum. Early pioneers used the galah as food when they made their "parrot-pies". However, I believe, the meat is very tough.

In one gun club, until very recently, galahs were used as targets for the shooters. Horrified bird lovers protested strongly and the practice ceased.

The pink breast and the silvery-grey backs of these birds make a beautiful sight as the galahs wheel through the air.

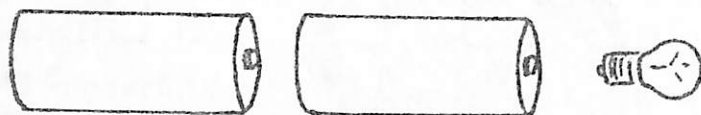
BATTERIES

and

WIRES

Have you ever wondered how a

Look at the different



the batteries to the bulb so

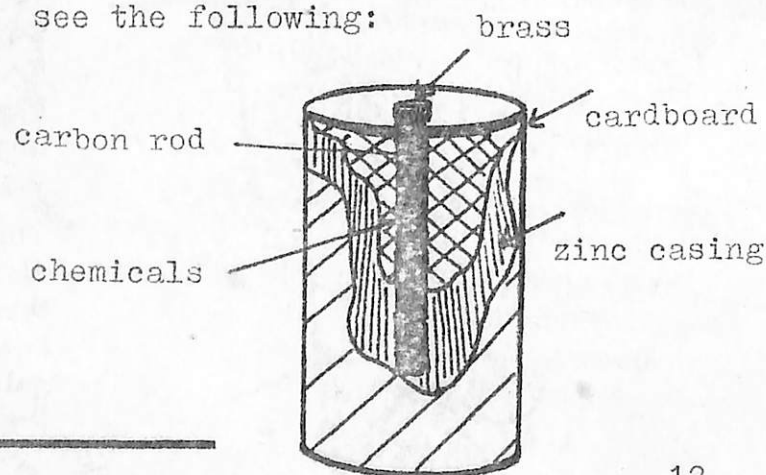
Could you do it?

Now that you have managed to

materials - try string for

FIND an old battery and carefully

see the following:



torch lights up?

parts of a torch

Find a piece of wire and see if you

can link up one (or both) of

as to make it glow.

light your bulb using wire, try other

example. Does the bulb glow?

pull it to pieces - can you

TAKE CARE!

* NEXT ISSUE we will again
talk about batteries and
wires and see if we can
make a simple circuit.

Drop a Line



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

Dear Girls and Boys, I hope you haven't forgotten the bell-miner survey. You can get your questionnaires from either myself or Mr. Frank Noelker, 10 Kathleen Street, Blackburn, 3130, but don't delay as we would like to get them in as soon as possible to make a start on tabulating results.

L.J. Delacca.

Christina Ballard, P.S.
The Basin writes....

Here is something for your Nature Notes. It is about a family of parrots.

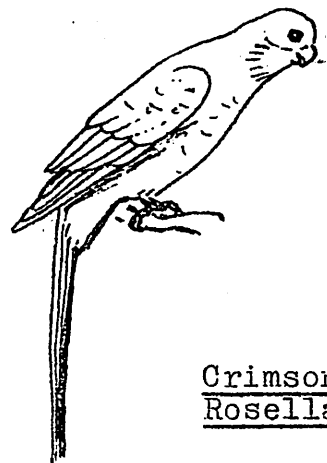
Last year when it was nearly summer a family of parrots came around our house. My mother kept on feeding them, and they wouldn't go away. They came each night about 7 o'clock and in the morning at 8.30.

The parrots came in Summer, Autumn and Spring but not in Winter. They haven't been at all this year.

Please could you tell me why they didn't come in Winter? I thought they would come more often as it is very cold

in winter and they wouldn't be able to find any food.

ED. Probably your parrots were Crimson Rosellas Christina as they abound in your area. Many birds migrate during the colder months and the usual reason is the search for food. Migration does not always mean a flight to another continent. Robins are migrants coming down to the plains in winter and returning in spring. Even though you had been feeding the parrots, probably instinct drove them to other feeding grounds in winter but of course there may have been more specific reasons too.



Crimson
Rosella

Kathie Sampson, St.
Catherines School
writes....

I have a carp fish at home in a bowl. One day while I was at school Mum saw it nosing around at the water snail. She didn't take any notice and went out of the room. In about 10 minutes time she looked again and saw him pulling the snail out of its shell and trying to eat it. She got the snail out and it was dead.

The carp had been fed that day so I don't think it could have been hungry. Is my fish carnivorous or something?

Could you please tell me why he did this? I have another carp now, as that one died last holidays.

ED. Yes Kathie, your fish is carnivorous as are most

fish. In fact we had exactly the same experience with our goldfish removing and eating our pond snail. Why not make a larger study of fish and their habits. I'm sure you would find it most fascinating.

* * * * *

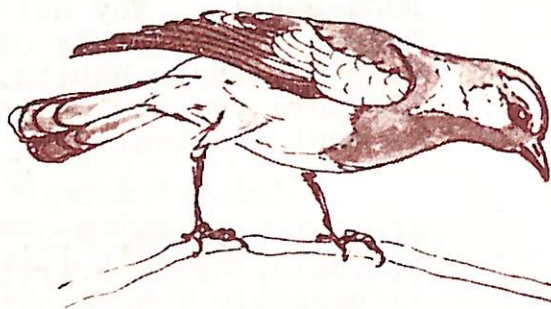
Michael Holding, P.S.
Lilydale, Grade 6 writes..

Recently I have noticed that a large number of Blackwood Wattles (Acacia melanoxylon) that grow around Lilydale are dead or dying. Is this because of the heavy rain we have had or is it some kind of a disease affecting these trees?

ED. Wattles are often a short-lived tree Mike. This may be due to various reasons - pests, such as borers or galls. In the case of your trees I doubt that excessive rainfall would be the cause as Blackwoods flourish in the higher rainfall areas. Show Mr. F. Rogers at your school the trees in question and I'm sure he will be able to give you a more definite answer as he is an authority on wattles.

* * * * *

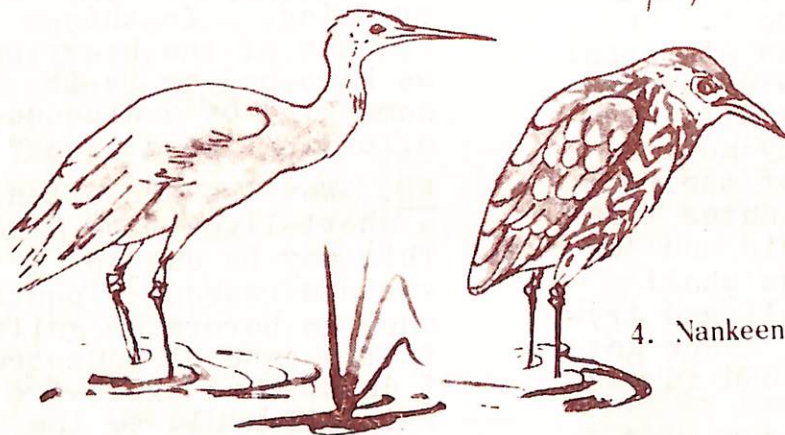
SEEN ROUND RINGWOOD.



1. Mudlark



2. GangGang Cockatoo



3. Whitefaced Heron

4. Nankeen Night-Heron

Category 'B'

NATURE NOTES COMMITTEE:

Mr. F.J.C. Rogers

P.S. Lilydale

Mr. G. White

P.S. Bayswater South

Mr. L. J. Delacca (Editor) P.S. Blackburn Lake

NEXT ISSUE WILL BE AT DEPOTS ON WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 4th.