

NATURE

OTES

Ebb Tide at Narrawong Beach, Portland.



Photo:

June Rogers.

"And the waves curl up and fling
Wet brown seaweed to the shore,
Laugh, and hurry back for more."
Elsie Pearson.

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★ ★ PRIZE LETTER

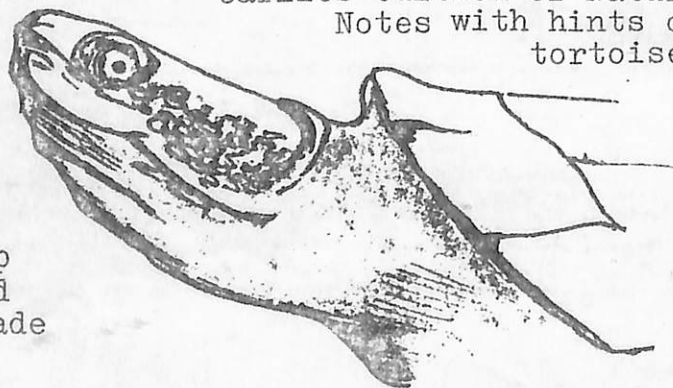
Many fine letters this month made it very difficult to choose our Prize-letter for November, so I finally decided that a tie was the best result, but I would have liked to be able to award a Periwinkle to all the people who sent in good letters. Kerrie Smith of Southwood and Josine Meijer of Surrey Hills will each receive a fine Periwinkle. Landsdowne Press will soon have some new titles among their Periwinkles, so watch out for them.

Here is Josine's letter.

When I first received my turtles, they were kept in a fairly small aquarium. At first I was surprised that they needed a small amount of water. If they had a large supply they couldn't live very long. I was also surprised to find they had lungs and not gills like fish.

Soon I found the aquarium too small, so with my savings I, later managed to buy a larger one. The first time I put them in I watched closely and soon saw them rushing madly about the aquarium. Toddle (the elder) started digging under a stone and Twiddle came to help him. Soon they had dug under and had made a little tunnel.

One of my books says "Turtles, tortoises and terrapins are all turtles; although the name tortoise is usually given to a land turtle." I have two Murray-short-necked which some people call tortoises and others turtles, while others call them terrapins. I'm not sure what to call them, could you tell me? ED. The generally accepted name 'Josine is Murray-short necked tortoise for this one. They make excellent pets. I will send you an earlier edition of Nature Notes with hints on tortoises.



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Committee of
Ringwood
Inspectorate

Your Heritage in Your Hands.

Dear Girls and Boys,

I well remember the first issue of "Nature Notes" - it was one folded sheet and was given to the children of only one school. Over the years the magazine has increased in size and the circulation covered many areas throughout Australia.

During this time I have also observed a rapid increase in the public's interest in the world around. Many bodies have been formed to protect our wildlife and ensure that our wildlife will still be here for our children's children to appreciate. I hope "Nature Notes" has played its part in increasing this interest.

Children! Our wildlife is in your hands. Will you make every effort to protect our birds, mammals, reptiles, plants and other living creatures as you grow older? Our animals and plants are world famous - koalas, waratahs and the Great Barrier Reef being know throughout all counties. Surely, you do not wish to be world famous as the "destroyers of Australia's wonderful wildlife"! This is up to you.

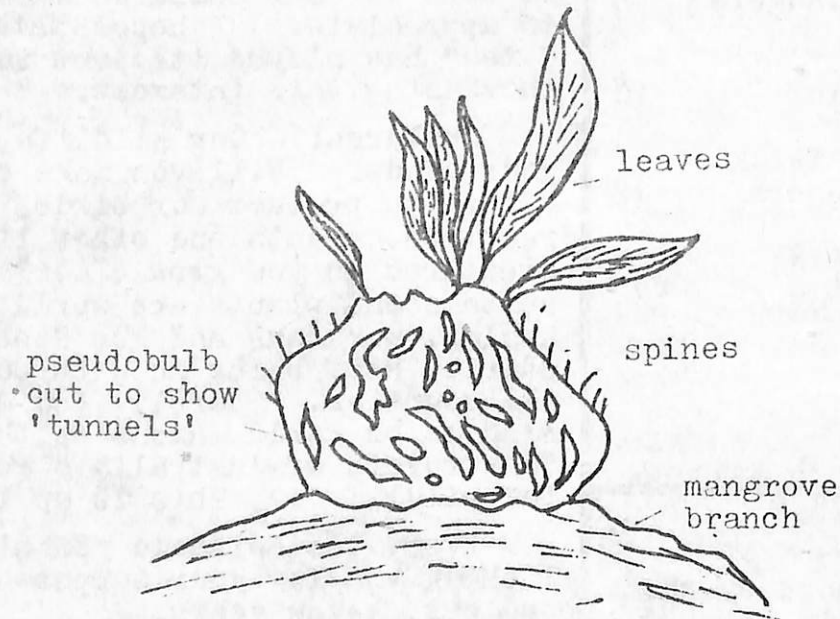
Every best wish to you all and I thank you for your support over the past seven years.

G. WHITE.

ANT-HOUSE PLANTS

Those who visited the annual nature show held in Melbourne Town Hall in September may have noticed in an exhibit on 'The Botany of Cook's Voyage' the strange Ant-house Plant (Myrmecodia beccarii), one of the species collected by Banks and Solander at Endeavour River in 1770. This specimen had been flown down from Cairns, its habitat being the tropical areas along the Gulf of Carpentaria and the coastlands of north eastern Queensland. The plant is an epiphyte on mangroves and certain other trees, i.e., like staghorn ferns and some orchids, it grows on the tree but is not a parasite.

The odd thing about it is that the pseudobulb or fleshy tuberous stem is riddled with tunnels usually inhabited by a colony of small brown ants (Iridomyrmex myrmecodiae).



Ant-house Plant

(Myrmecodia beccarii)

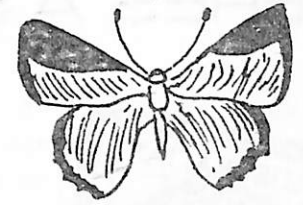
(myrmex = ant) (Beccari, an Italian naturalist-explorer of New Guinea)

For a long time the mystery of how they could have made these tunnels was unsolved, but the fact is that an orange and black Jewel Butterfly (Miletus apollo) lays her eggs on the surface of the spiny tuber, the hatched caterpillars then make the tunnels by eating the potato-like pulp, then pupate and finally emerge as butterflies. A newly-mated queen ant then enters and lays eggs inside, and so the ant colony is established. Like the Green Tree-ants that defend their leaf-sewn 'nests' so fiercely these ants rush out and bite furiously when their home is disturbed.

The plants are not harmed by any of these events, this being a good example of what is called commensalism ('sharing the same table'), and nearly all of them become homes for ants in this way. However, when it was cut, the plant on view at the show looked as in the drawing, but there were no ants. The leaves are leathery and fleshy; the flowers are small and white.

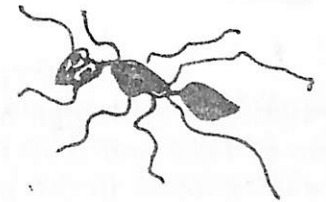
Ant plants belong to the family Rubiaceae, and are therefore related to the garden plants Coprosma and Gardenia. Australia has four species, but New Guinea has at least 86 kinds (30 species of Myrmecodia and 56 of Mydnophytum). Many are found in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

N.B. The Little Black Ant and the Argentine Ant, common pests in houses, are also species of Iridomyrmex.



Jewel Butterfly
(Miletus apollo)

(almost actual size)



Ant-plant Ant
(Iridomyrmex myrmecodiae)

(greatly enlarged)

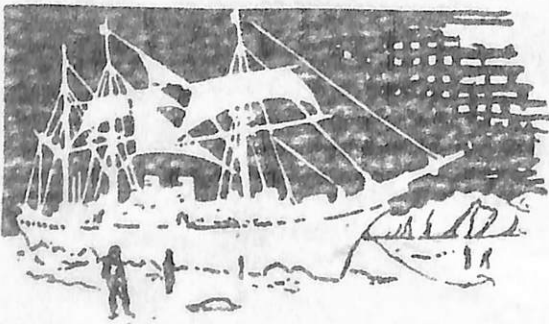
THERE'S A STORY IN A STAMP



Issued on 17th November, 1954, this blue-black stamp commemorates Australia's interest in the Antarctic. It was designed by Mrs Phillip Law, wife of the famous Australian who has spent much time exploring the Antarctic Regions. Since 1967 a set of stamps has been issued especially for the Antarctic Territory.

CAPTAIN COOK was the first white man to visit the Antarctic. Although he only touched on the fringes of this great mass of land and ice, Cook was sufficiently wise to turn back before he was trapped in the pack ice.

About 1000 miles south east of Hobart lies Macquarie Island. In 1911, Australia set-up its first Antarctic station there. This station closed down in December, 1915. Not till 29th December, 1947 was another station established. This station was built at Heard Island. Since then Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition - A. N. A. R. E. - stations have been established at Macquarie Island (1948), Mawson (1954), Davis (1957), and Wilkes (1957). Heard Island station closed down in 1955. These stations carry out scientific research.



Some of the WILDLIFE as shown on the stamp:



PENGUINS

The Rockhopper or Crested Penguin, as drawn here, makes its breeding ground in the colder areas of the sub-antarctic. Penguins breed in large colonies - many thousands living together. In the water they are wonderful swimmers, but they have enemies in the vicious Killer Whales and seals.

SEALS

The seal shown on the stamp is called an Elephant Seal or Sea Elephant. These large creatures live on Macquarie Island which has been declared a Sanctuary for these beasts. Many hunters were killing off the seals to gain the natural oils.

They are so called because of the trunk-like extension on the noses of the males. Old male bulls may attain a length of twenty-two feet and weigh over three tons!

Waddling clumsily on the land this huge animal swims with effortless ease and grace in the water. Nevertheless, he, too, has an enemy in the Killer Whale.

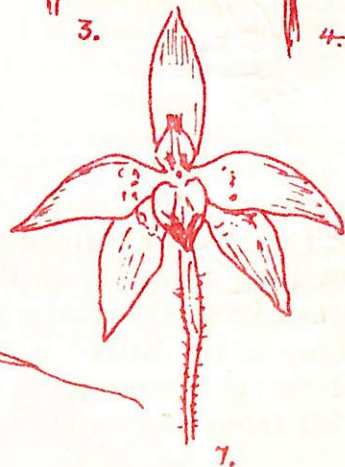
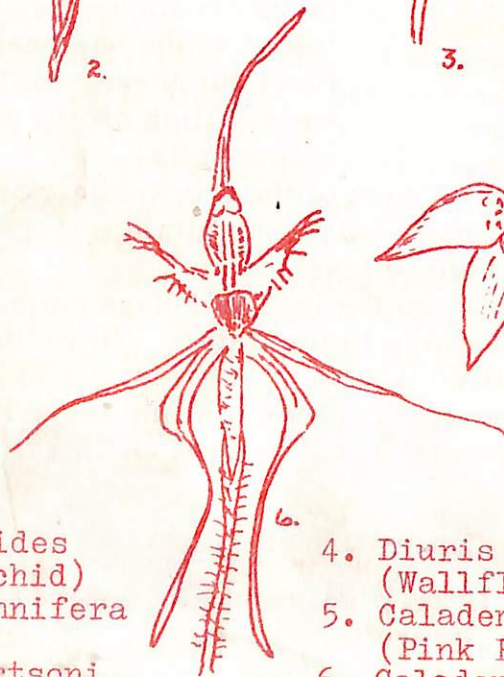
His thirty or more wives give him the large task of protecting them all from other males and natural enemies!

Names of the ANARE Research Stations:

- **MAWSON - Sir Douglas Mawson was a famous Australian explorer of the Antarctic regions.
- **DAVIS - Captain John King Davis commanded many Australian exploration ships.
- **WILKES was an American who led an expedition in 1838-40.

Things To Look For—

During last month and this, you may have been able to find several of these orchids in bushland. They do not like the ground to be disturbed and are becoming rarer so do not pick them or tread them down.



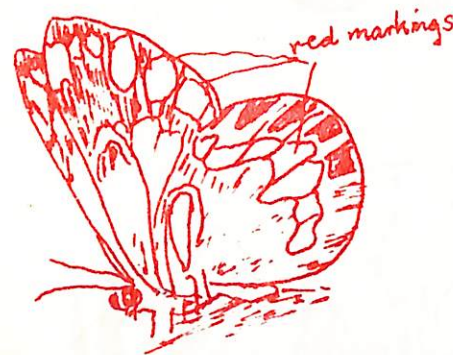
- Thelymitra ixioides
(Spotted Sun Orchid)
Thelymitra antennifera
(Rabbit's ears)
Calochilus robertsoni
(Purplish Beard
Orchid)

4. Diuris longifolia
(Wallflower Orchid)
5. Caladenia carnea
(Pink Fingers)
6. Caladenia dilatata
(Green-comb Spider
Orchid)

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NOVEMBER.



Imperial White Butterfly

The male Imperial White Butterfly is only white on the upper side but when you see the under side of the wings you can see brilliant colouring of red and black. The female is just a greenish white with black markings.

Have you found the chrysalis and been able to watch the butterfly emerge?

The caterpillars feed on mistletoe.

* * * * *

7. Glossodia major
(Waxlip Orchid)

9..



Grass trigger-plant may be found with its grass-like leaves and full flower spike. The flowers have a special mechanism which springs up as shown in the drawing when a small insect lands on the flower.

You can "spring" the trigger if you use a piece of grass, but don't "spring" them all because the plant uses this means to get pollen so that the seeds will be fertile.



Nov. 1970

ULURU



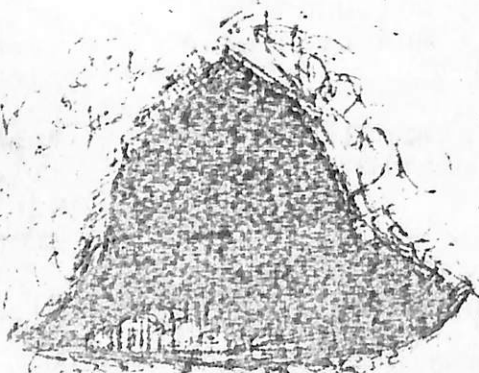
The ranger looked startled when I said that we (my family and I) would like to stay in the park for a week. "Most people", he said, "only stay one day. They climb the Rock take a quick trip to the Olgas and watch the Rock turn red at sunset".

Despite the dusty conditions, we were determined that AYERS ROCK and the OLGAS should feature in our trip around Australia. From Alice Springs to Ayers Rock we travelled over 300 miles of the worst road in our 16,000 mile trip.

Yes we did climb the Rock, we made it a whole day trip to the Olgas, (it should have been more) and we twice saw the Rock turn red at sunset.

Putta

(Marsupial Pouch)



A flight over the area gave us an excellent view of both places, but exploring the caves in the Rock was by far the most interesting part.

With a 40c. booklet that we bought from the ranger we spent a full half day examining the northern face of the largest monolith in the world. Less than 50 years ago the area had been inhabited by two tribes of aborigines, one keeping to the north the other to the south. Most of the natural features of the Rock had significance in Aboriginal Mythology. ---

PUTTA "Marsupial Pouch",

NGALTAWADI "Digging Stick",

LOONBA "Home of the Kingfisher" are just a few.

A number of the caves contained aboriginal paintings and one WORREAKI (forbidden to women) had walls stained with blood from the last initiates.

What is a monolith?

Have you read any aboriginal myths and legends?

Find Ayers Rock on a map of Australia.



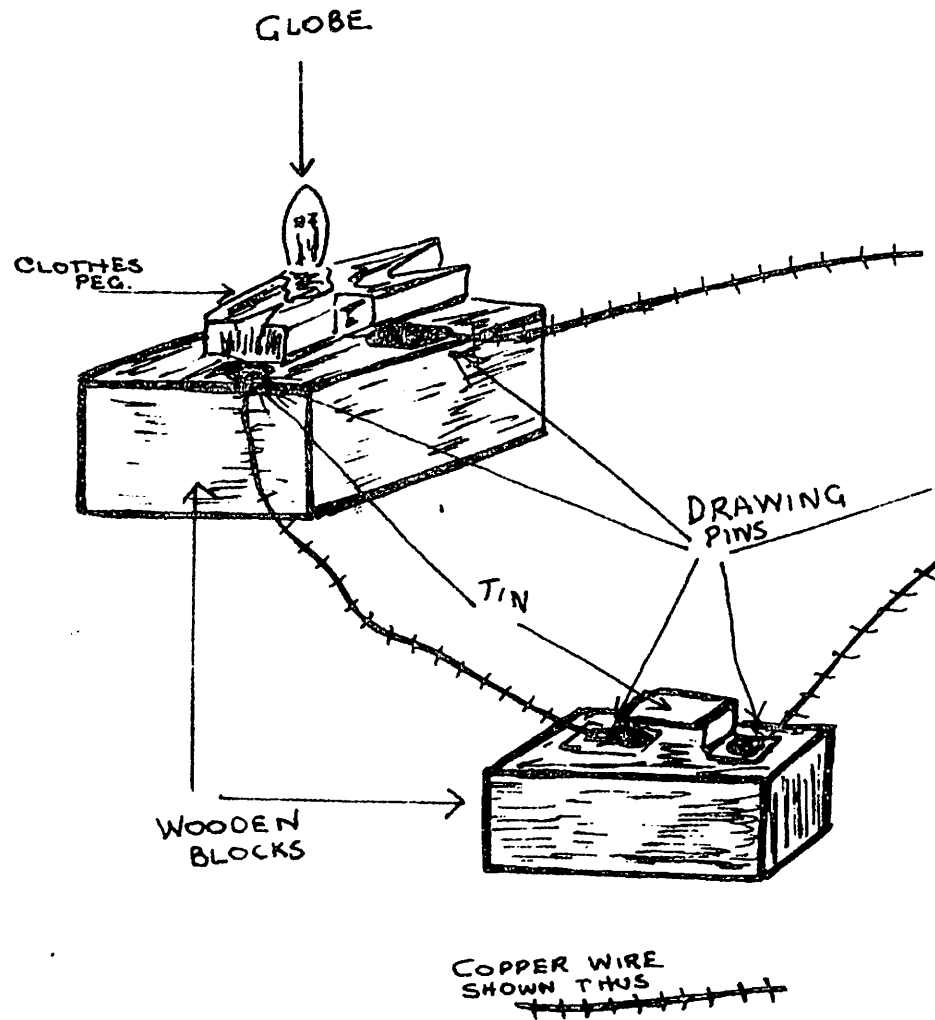
This cave, (now known as the "sound shell") is a chest cave - all caves on the north side are chest caves.

Circuit Tricks

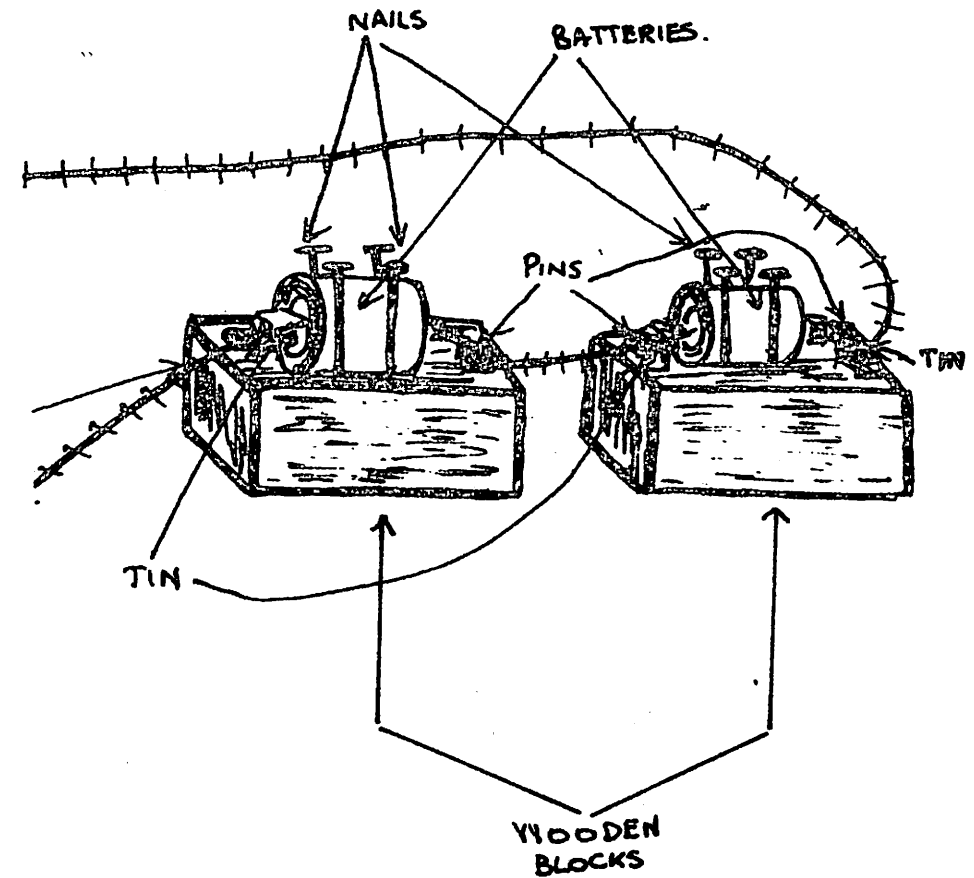
As promised last month, here is a circuit for you to try.

This one was designed by Trevor Ingham from Lilydale Primary School.

CAN YOU MAKE A MODEL LIKE IT?



Why not experiment by making other circuits and see what you can come up with?



Drop a Line



Kerrie our joint winner of this month's prizeletter writes:-

One day my mother called me to show me something that will interest "Nature Notes" readers, a baby blackbird, slightly larger than a sparrow, of a tawny colour.

The father bird, black with a yellowish bill, had been guarding it, but now had gone to find food. The baby, however, tried to fly, but could only manage to get two feet into the air. At last it succeeded in flying over an azalea bush. The father returned with a worm in its beak ready to feed the baby. This was done by the baby opening its mouth wide and the father pushing the worm in. The blackbird feeds on insects, snails and fruit and is a regular pest to orchadists.

Nature Notes

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

Since then I have discovered that the blackbird, an introduced species, came to Australia around the time of 1860. Now it is very widely-spread and quite common.

ED. Yes Kerrie blackbirds have become quite a pest in most areas. Unfortunately they are also somewhat responsible for driving out our native birds, with a consequent rise in the incidence of insect pests.

* * * * *

Peter O'Connor of Marcellin College writes....

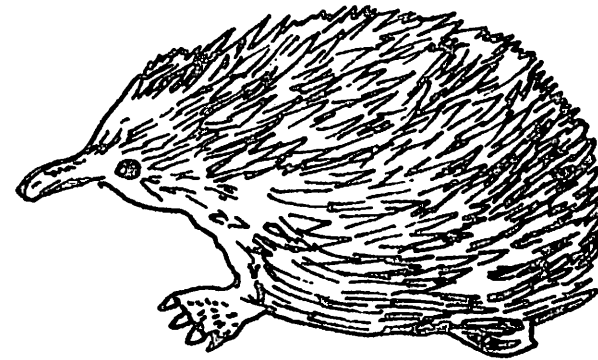
During one of my frequent walks to a nearby Park, in early Autumn, I came across a Spiny Ant-eater, (Echidna). I was very excited, as they are rare in this particular Park. I picked the small creature up gingerly, and placed him in a large box which I use for catching lizards on many occasions.

When I arrived home I placed him in a small enclosed area, and I watched

him, fascinated, as he nosed around his new surroundings. The next morning I discovered he had disappeared, and I had lost him.

However, I enjoyed the experience of discovering my first Echidna; and thought I would share it with you.

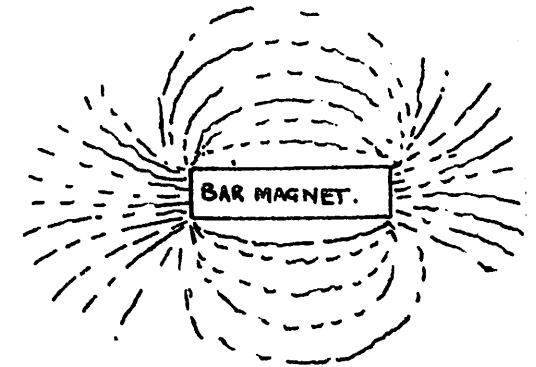
ED. Thank you for your excellent letter Peter. It is always exciting to be able to touch or to hold a live native animal. How do you think he managed to disappear so soon from his enclosure? Have you ever watched one burrowing?



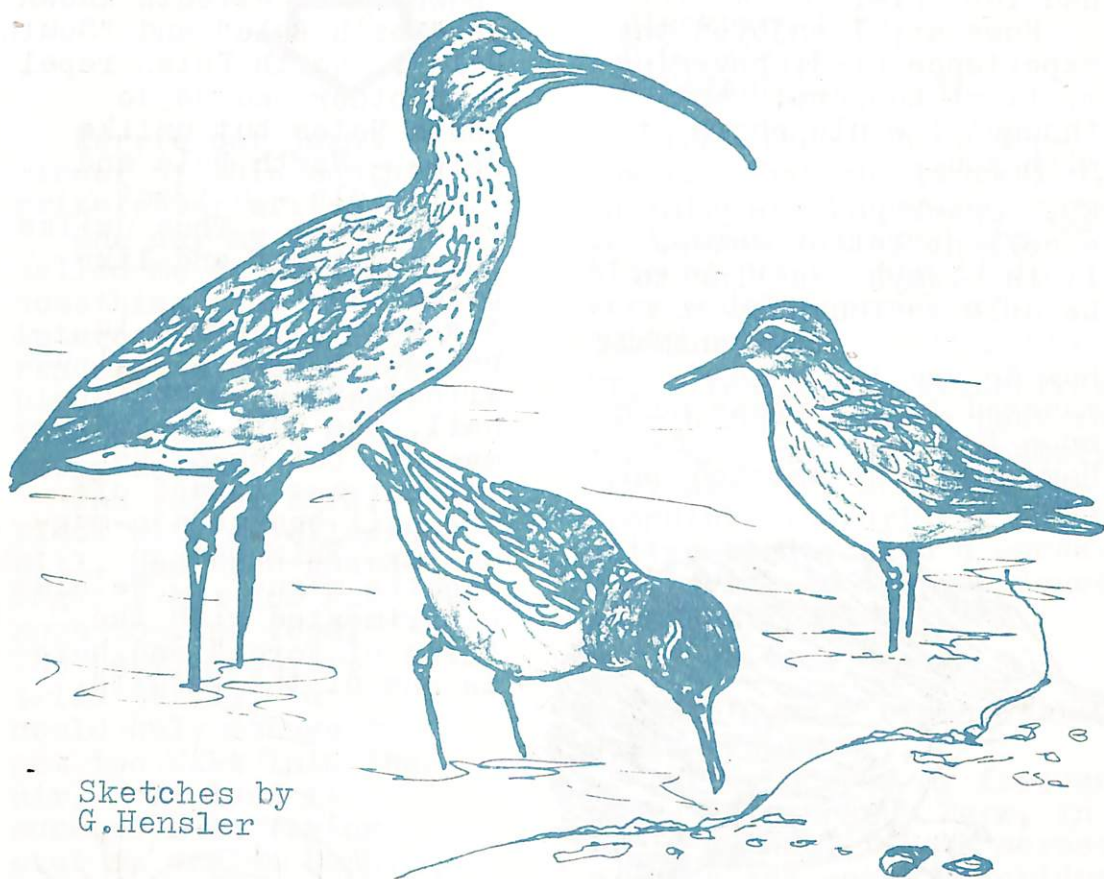
John Reeves also of Marcellin tells us about some work with magnets.

Recently my class experimented with magnets and recorded our observations. Some of the results were:-
1. When a bar magnet is sprinkled with iron filings
15.. they

concentrated at the ends or "Poles".
2. The two ends or "Poles" of a bar magnet or any magnet have different "powers" or effects known as "North Pole" and "South Pole". North Poles repel each other and so do South Poles but unlike Poles - North Pole and South Pole - attract each other. Thus unlike poles attract and like poles repel.
3. When a current is passed through a coil of wire wrapped around a nail, the nail became a magnet, but when the current was turned off, the nail became non-magnetic. This was on electro magnet. We also experimented with the "Line of Force" and here is one of the results.



Wide-awake Waders



Sketches by
G.Hensler

Curlew.

Painted-Snipe.

Sharp-tailed
Sandpiper.

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<u>NATURE NOTES COMMITTEE:</u>			
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 AT DEPOTS ON WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 9th.

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