

nature notes



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6 cents

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Next issue Oct. 6th

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Cover:

Acacia glandulicarpa

photo F. Rogers.

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CATEGORY B.

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Dear Girls and Boys,

A line from an old folk song goes:

"I'll take you up the country and show to you the bush."

Whenever I get the chance to get away and have another look at the bush I eagerly seize on it. Just such an opportunity came on a recent visit to Bendigo, where, within a few miles of this provincial city it is possible to rid oneself of the noisy clatter of a busy street.

How different to wend one's way along a shaded bush track where the only sounds are the sounds of the bush - a cheerful grey thrush, a breathless pardalote or the chirp of a cricket, where on this winter morning the sun's rays were falling warmly on dew-laden scrub and sapling. For a brief moment time stood still - then back to reality as in the distance the strident screech of a chain saw started up.

I wonder for how much longer will it be possible, even in a country as vast as ours, for us to "go bush" and shut out even for a short period the increasing race for instant everything.

Girls and boys it is in your hands to make it certain that we can keep a fair share of this land - our land - as natural bushland sanctuaries.

Why not make a start now by setting aside part of your garden as a section for native plants.

Best wishes,
L. J. Delacca.

Possums



Kangaroos and Wallabies.



Wombat and Koala.

The pouched mammals or marsupials in Australia are divided into five families, or sometimes three if kangaroos and wombats and possums are put together.



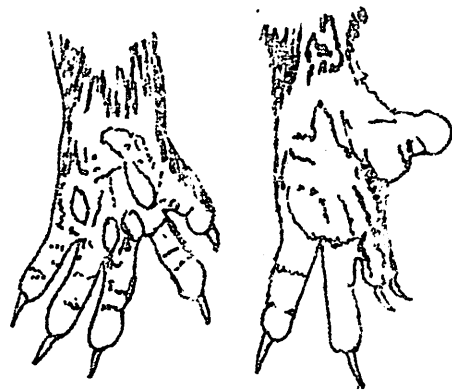
Rabbit-eared Bandicoot.

POSSUMS are tree-dwellers and all of them are harmless.

Their size ranges from the small pigmy possums which feed mainly on insects and nectar and pollen; to the large gliders which are also part of the possum family.

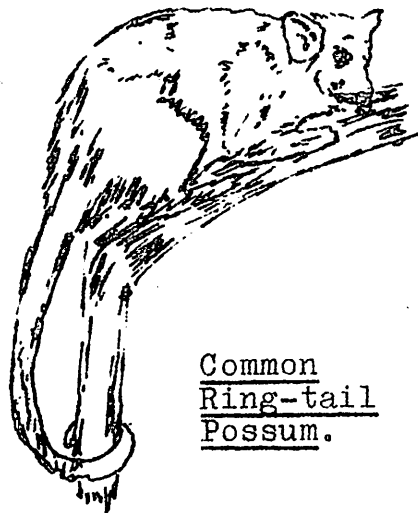
The possum family have a forward-opening pouch. What kind of a pouch do the other marsupials have? Many possums have a prehensile tail - this is a tail which can be wrapped around branches and twigs. Often the possums swing by their tail until a branch can be caught with the fore paws, or if they slip they are able to climb up their own tail.

POSSUMS, (Continued.)



Feet of Ring-tail Possum.

Perhaps the best distinguishing feature of possums is the peculiar feet. The first toe of the hind foot is like a thumb. The second and third hind toes are united. Have a close look at the picture of them. Can you tell which foot is the hind foot? What use do you think a ring-tail possum will make of its two small toes? The possum's front foot has two "thumbs".



Common
Ring-tail
Possum.

One of our two well-known possums is the Eastern or Common Ring-tail. This possum is found down the east coast of Australia from Queensland to South Australia. It lives in forest and woodland; and it is quite at home in a park, as long as there is food enough. Or you may even see it around a suburban home. Perhaps you have heard the strange noises they make as they scurry about at night.

The ring-tail possum feeds upon leaves of various trees including peppermint and bottlebrush. It will also eat the fruits from trees: apples, bananas, oranges etc. It has even been known to eat mistletoe and wattle blossom.



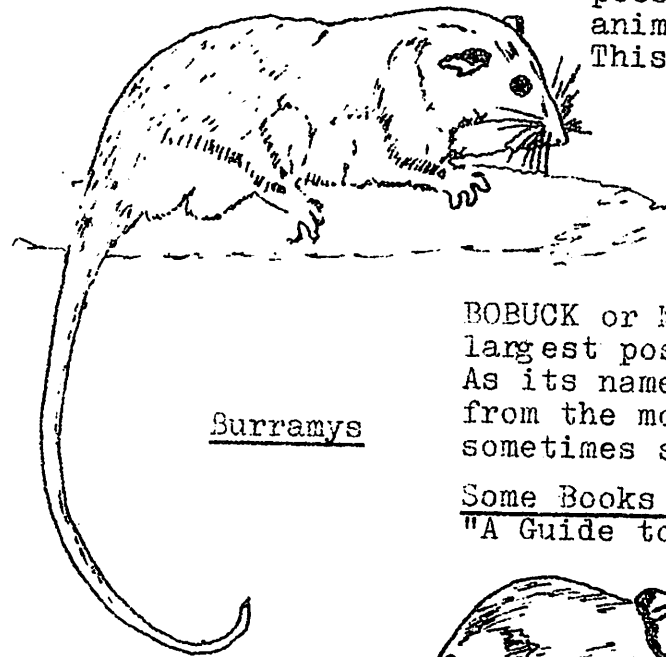
Silver-grey
Possum.
Brushy Tail.

Our other well-known possum is the brush tail. This is a larger possum than the ringtail and has a brushy tail, larger ears and darker colouring.

These animals are often shot and some have their skins used. Specimens of this were collected by people on the First Fleet, and were sent to England by Governor Phillip.

BARRAMYS is one of the pigmy possums. We knew about this animal before we saw it alive. This is because fossil bones were found in caves and the like.

You will find this possum in the high plains of Victoria and New South Wales.



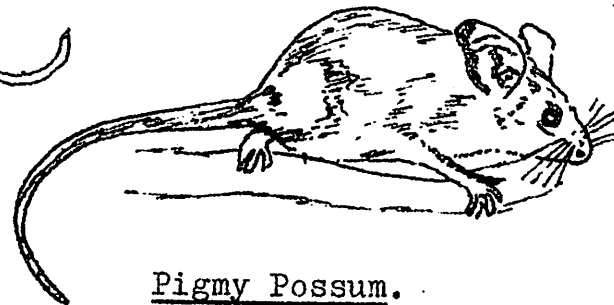
Surramys

BOBUCK or Mountain Possum is the largest possum found in Victoria. As its name suggests, it comes from the mountain area, and is sometimes shot for its fur.

Some Books to Read:

"A Guide to Native Mammals of Australia" by W. D. L. Ride.

"Furred Animals of Australia." by Ellis Troughton.

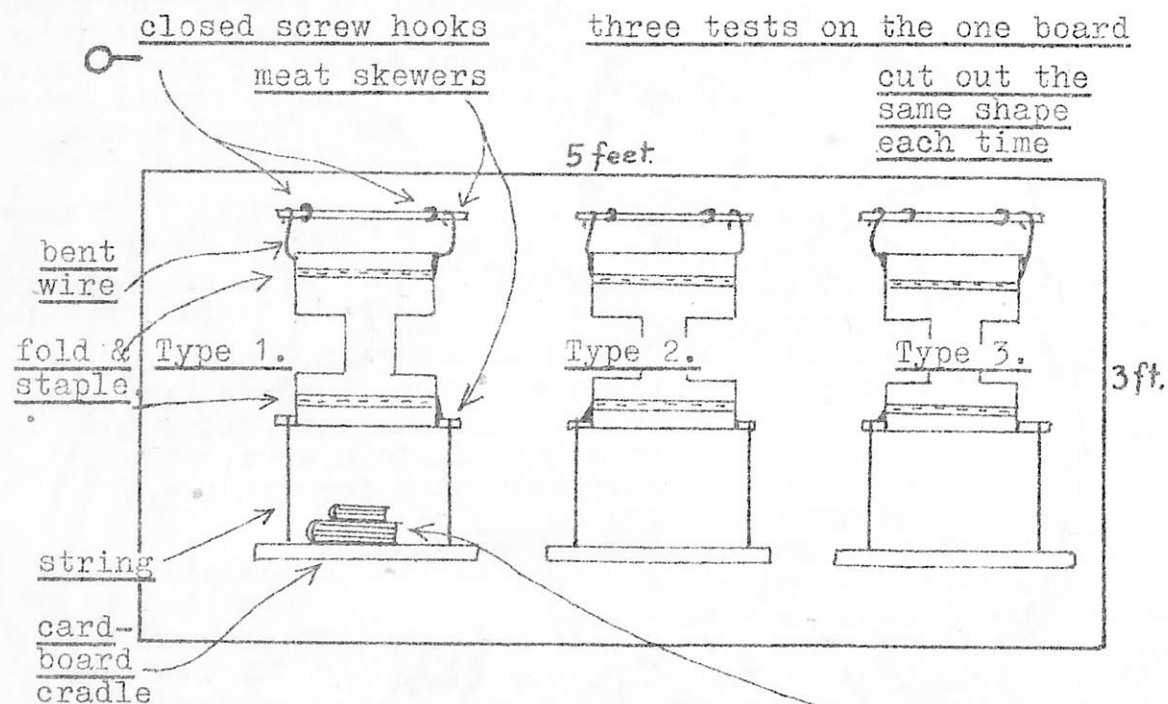


Pigmy Possum.

Testing

In your science work you probably handle all kinds of materials. When you come to think about it, you can make up some very good experiments to test these materials. Perhaps you might like to try the following tests. But do not just copy them as they are, think up some other variations for yourself. If you do think of something new, and it works, Nature Notes would like to hear all about it from you.

TESTING PAPER: to see how much weight it will carry.



Find the breaking point of different types of paper by adding weights carefully. How many types of paper can you collect?

Now try it again with wet paper. Are the results different?

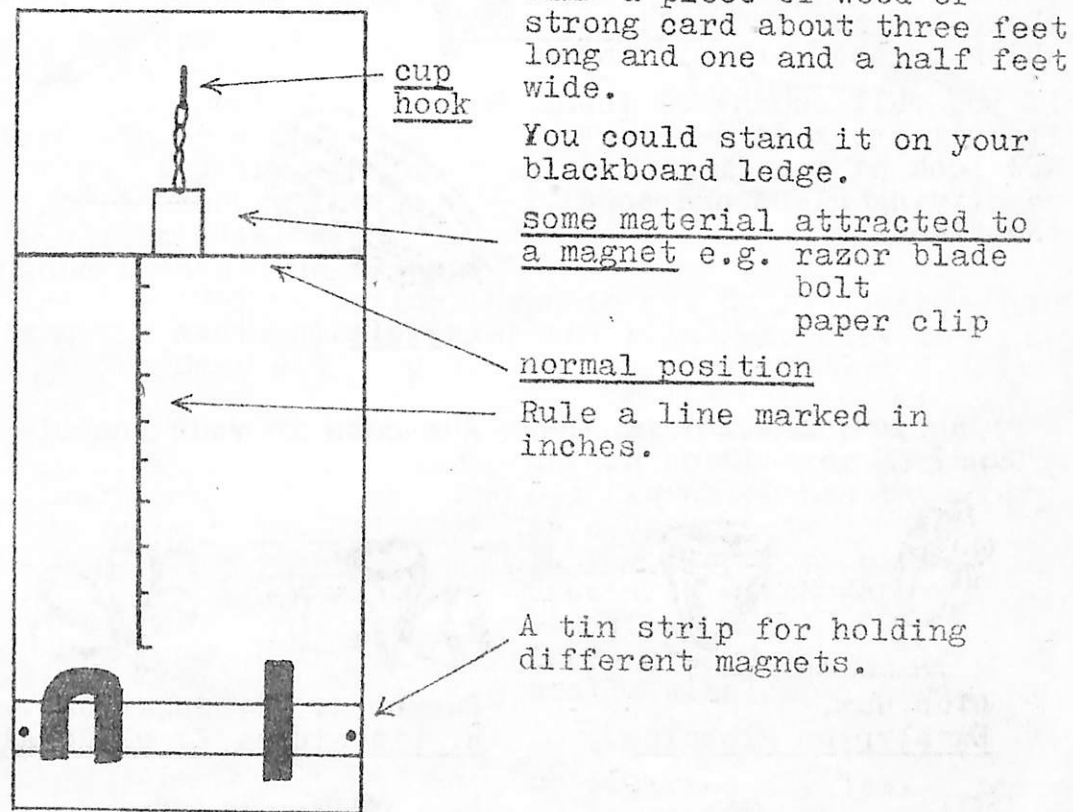
6.

Weights:
(bricks,
books, etc.)

Time

MAGNET TESTER: to see which of your magnets is the strongest, and by how much.

How many different types of magnets can you collect in your classroom or school? This machine will help you to find out the strength of each one.



You can now test each magnet by attracting the object at the end of the elastic bands and slowly moving down the scale. How far does each type of magnet stretch the bands? How would you keep a record of this information?

7.

Things to Look For in Sept.

Is there a she-oke in your schoolground or near your school?

If you look at it closely you will see that although it seems to have long leaves, these are really small branches which do the work of leaves.

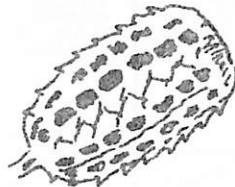
If you pull on one of these it will break at a "ring". Now look at the ring under a magnifying glass and count the "teeth".



Seed.



Foliage.



Fruit.

Can you find any of these gum-nuts in your school-ground?



Blue Gum.
Eucalyptus globulus.



Eurabbie.
E. bicostata.



Sugar Gum.
E. cladocalyx.



Yellow Gum.
Eucalyptus leucoxylon.



Mountain Ash. Red Flowering Gum.
E. regnans. E. ficifolia.



Of course people recognize the mudlark. It is one of our most useful birds. Watch it. What is it eating? When does it make a call?

How can you tell the male from the female bird? In my drawing I have used the usual signs to denote the female or male. A man named Linnaeus used these signs in 1751 to define these terms. He was using signs from the Medieval alchemist and botanist. They meant ♂ for Mars and ♀ for Venus.



Mudlark.

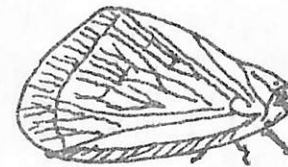


tail at the ready

tail sprung

Have a look under some garden rubbish or perhaps an old bag which has been left in a damp spot. Do you find some small creatures which jump erratically? These are spring-tails; small, wingless insects.

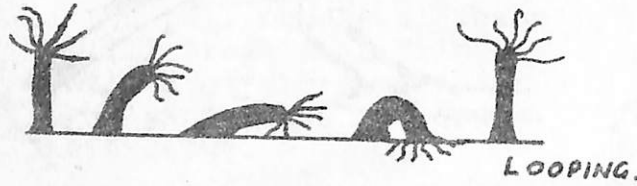
Do you find any leaf-hoppers on the shrubs and trees these days? What colour are the ones you have found? Are they all the same colour?



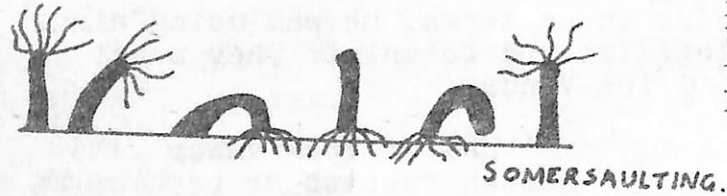
Leaf-hopper.

Movement

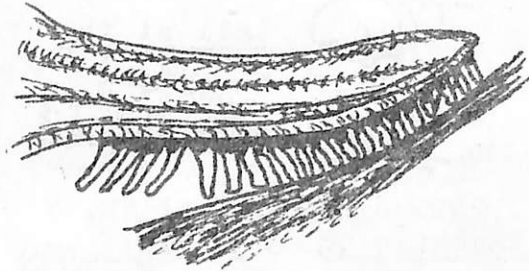
All living things move. Simple animals move by contraction and expansion of parts of their bodies. Others wave tiny hairlike coverings to move themselves through the water. More highly developed animals have muscles for movement. Where the muscles are attached to a rigid skeleton, movement can be more rapid. Here are some ways in which animals move: See if you can discover any others!



The HYDRA, a tiny freshwater animal, glides by contracting and expanding its foot; it swims by waving its tentacles; it can loop and somersault.

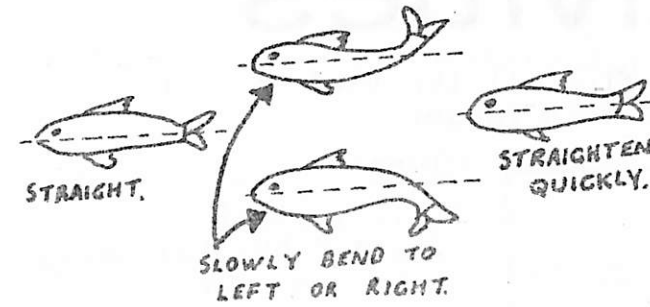
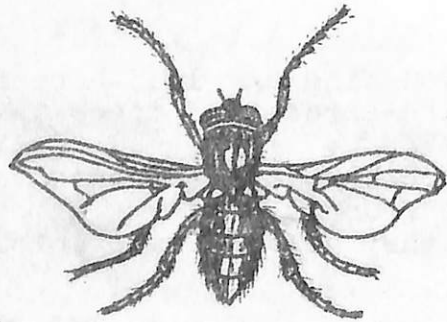


The arm of the STARFISH has contractile or tube feet provided with suckers to "hook and pull". If a starfish should lose an arm it can grow another.

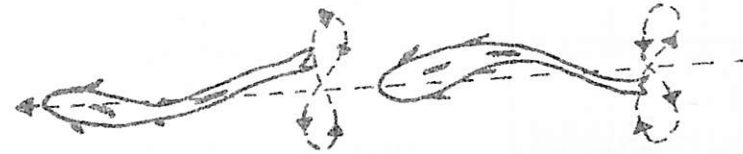


INSECTS have jointed limbs for walking. They fly by a "rowing" movement. Their wings are not limbs, and have no bones.

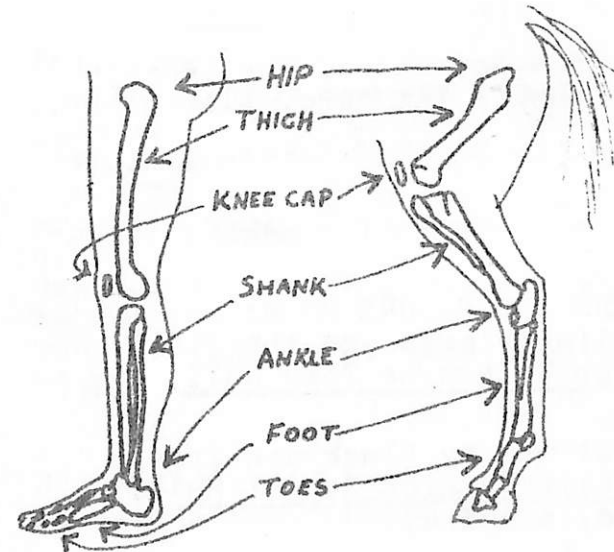
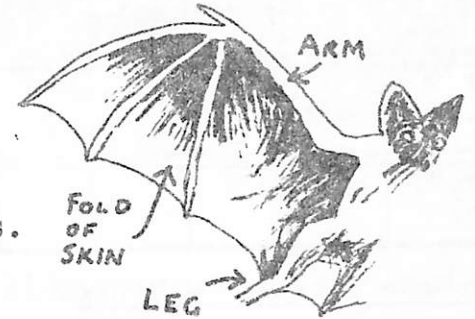
Housefly.



FISH swim by a "sculling" movement of their tails. This is really a figure of eight movement which is made as the tail moves from side to side.



BIRDS AND BATS fly by a "rowing" movement. Their forearms make forward and downward strokes.



MAN and most four-footed animals walk by a "poling" movement. The limbs are jointed for smoother movement.

Man walks on sole of foot.

Horse walks on third toe.

Activities

FIND THE WORD: you will find all the words for this puzzle in this issue.

1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

Clues:

-tail page 9.
- eaten by ring-tail possum b..... page 4.
- find the marsupial in this letter scramble: AWTBMO page 3.
- another name for the mountain possum page 5.
- a type of pigmy possum page 5.
- a tree that has branches that do the work of leaves page 8.

Nature Tongue Twisters:

1. She sells sea-shells by the sea-shore. The sea-shells she sells are sea-shore shells I'm sure. (Two times.)
2. Six thick thistle sticks. (Six times.)

Now make up some of your own; you will find that some sounds are better than others for making tongue twisters.

THINGS TO SEE: WILD FLOWERS AND NATURE SHOW: run by the Society for Growing Australian Plants and the Field Naturalists' Club. At Lower Melbourne Town Hall, September 20-22, 10a.m. to 10p.m.

FLOWER SHOW: run by Blackburn Tree Preservation Society at Blackburn High School Hall. October 2nd. and 3rd.

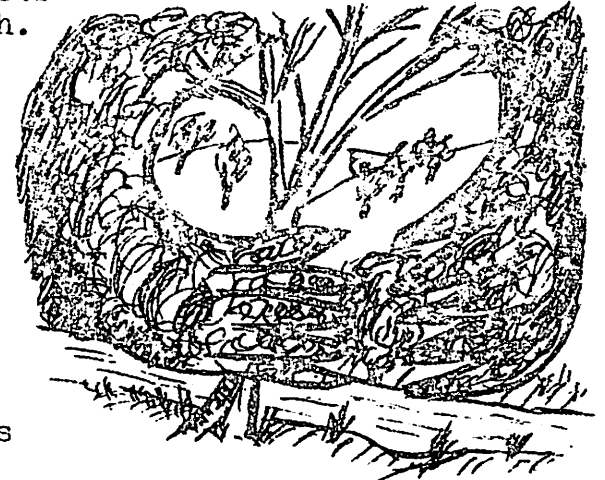
12.

This month we have two poems that were sent in by readers from Mullum Primary School.

POLLUTION: by Margaret Kett, Grade 6, Age 10 years.

Cool and clean waters
That run swiftly by,
Through tall gloomy forests
Where trees stand so high.
Cool and clean waters
So clear and blue,
Was it so long ago
That all this was true?

"No" is the answer
I'm sure you'll say.
But listen!
Just look at the streams
Of today.
All covered with slime
And dirt and mirk.
Oh, cool and clean waters
Where is it you lurk?



POLLUTION: by Christine Fallon, Grade 6, 11 years.

Pollution.
Something that man has created to destroy
Himself.
Something which destroys all the trees and
Flowers.
From the vast blackness of space
We
Can see the world engulfed in a cloud of smog and
Soot.
Man has finally created something he cannot
Stop.

Bravo girls!!!! Excellent poems. What about some more poems readers. Choose any topic from the world of nature.

THE PUZZLING PLATYPUS:

Here is a letter which we have decided to print even though we do not know who sent it. Please remember to put your name on your letters.

Anyway, we think it is a good letter because it shows very careful research. When you read it we think you will see how the facts have been very carefully gathered and put in order.

The platypus is a very unusual creature. The platypus has webbed feet, and it depends on them to swim. The male's hind leg has a spur of venom that is less poisonous than a snake's venom.

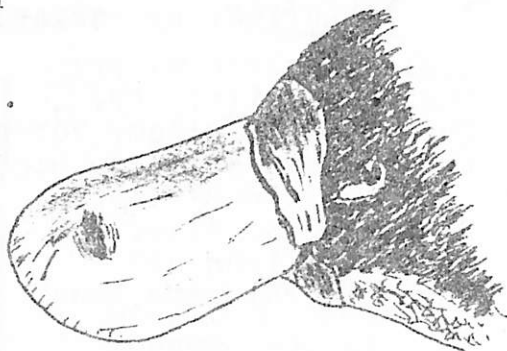
A platypus has a bill like a duck's, only the platypus's bill is moist and flexible and not hard. The platypus's feeding periods are at dawn and again at dusk. The platypus eats shrimps, prawns, yabbies and worms.

A mother platypus builds a nest of leaves under the ground. Here the mother lays her eggs. A mother normally lays about two eggs. During seven to fourteen days that it takes them to hatch the mother does not eat anything or will not leave the burrow unless for a quick swim or quick grooming of the coat. With the sharp tops of their bills the infant platypus, hardly more than an inch long, cut their way out of the shells.

In the first few days the platypus is blind, and the mother does not feed it. The mother leaves the babies and looks for food for herself. The mother's milk begins to break out like sweat from the pores of the abdomen and this is where the little ones lap it up.

The platypus's burrow has two doorways to its nest. One is by the water and one is on the land. This helps the platypus to escape from hounds that chase them.

Letters



Prize Letter

This month's book prize (a Periwinkle) goes to Deborah Pool of Blackburn Lake Primary School. The letter shows that Deborah has made a careful examination of Blackburn Lake.

On Monday 2nd. August our class went down to Blackburn Lake for a walk. We saw quite a few things including eight dead fish floating on top of the water. It was very muddy there. One girl lost her shoe it was so muddy. Here is a list of the things we saw and heard.

BIRDS

Willy wagtails.
Egret.
Rosellas.
Crow.
Bellbird.
Mopoke.
Swallow.
Cormorant.
Duck.
Mudlark.
Blue Crane.
Eastern Shriketit.
Wattle Bird.

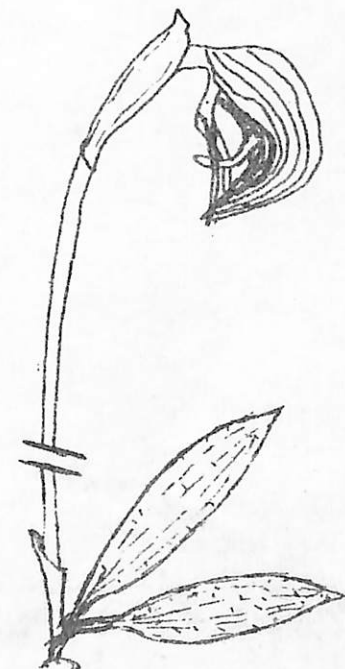
PLANTS

Moss.
Toadstools.
Watsonia.
Silver Wattle.
Heath.
Sword Grass.
Correa.
Tree Fungi.
Prickly Moses.
Shell Fungi.
Bullrush.
Sundew.
Greenhood
Orchids.

Deborah Pool, Grade 6F

As you can see from this very good article, for schools in the Eastern Suburbs, Blackburn Lake is an interesting place to visit.

You will find Lake Road in your street directory, and the lake runs along the side of the road.



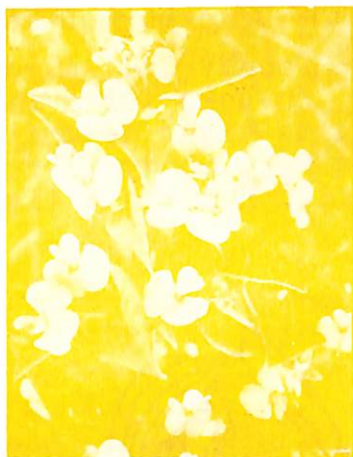
Greenhood Orchid.
Pterostylis nutans.

victorian parks

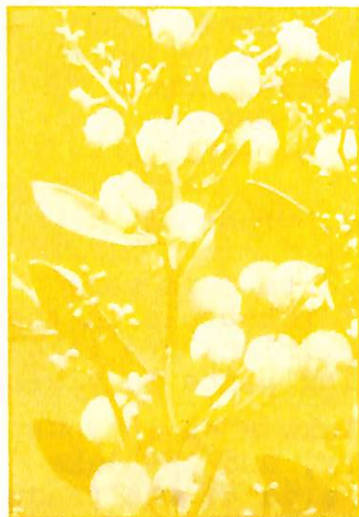
When you visit our National Parks you may be able to find these specimens.



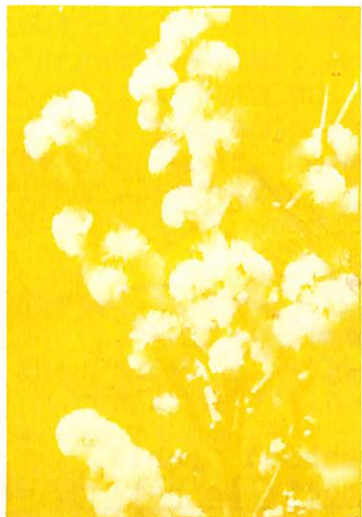
Murray Pine.
Callitris preissii.



Handsome Flat-pea.
Platylobium formosum.



Acacia myrtifolia.



Acacia spinescens.