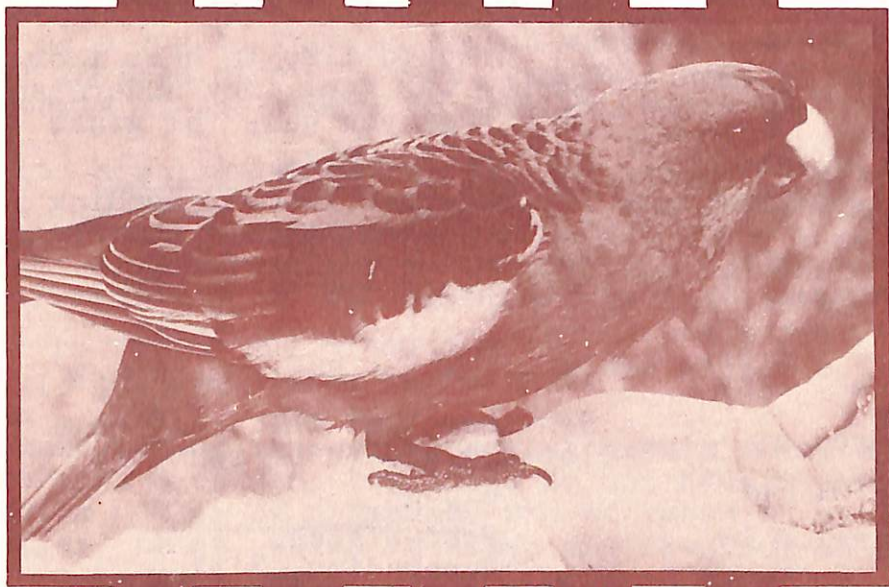


nature notes



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Registered at	
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periodical.	
Category B.	

Dear Girls and Boys,

Recently I came across these words:

"Can you hear the grass growing?"

I thought that this was an odd thing to say; can you really hear the grass growing? After thinking about this for a while I think I understood what the words meant. Do you think the question is odd? Can you suggest what it means?

I would like to hear from people who feel they understand what "Can you hear the grass growing?" means.

Remember to keep sending your letters about things that interest you in the world of nature. People are interested in your experiences.

Each month the author of the best letter receives a book prize.

Remember that all articles and letters are to be sent to:

Box 30,
Post Office,
Nunawading, 3131.

Best wishes,

M. J. Coote,
Editor.

* * * * *

Orchids

ALTHOUGH there are flowers blooming in our bushland all the year round, springtime is certainly the time when there is most to see. This is true of our orchids. So many orchids flower at this time that we sometimes forget to look for them in other seasons as well.

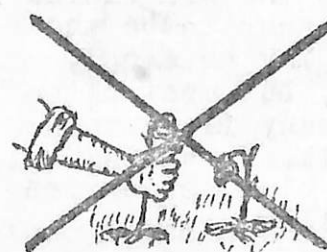
Orchids may be found in any type of bushland. Some grow singly, while others grow together in quite large colonies. In either case, it is well to remember that they are protected plants, and should not be picked or disturbed. The plants are easily destroyed, so by looking and not disturbing, we can play a part in the conservation of our environment.

To help you to know an orchid when you see one; and to tell it from other flowers, you will need to know which parts of the flower to look at. Watch for these thing:

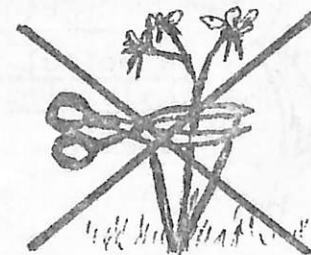
- (i) a column which carries the stigma (a sticky disc for catching pollen), and the pollen sacs.
- (ii) a flower with six segments, one of which is usually quite different from the others. This different segment or specialized petal, is the labellum, and it is sometimes called a lip or tongue.

Remember that there are several plants which have flowers with a column, but these do not have the right pattern or number of segments. One of these is called the trigger plant, which is often mistaken for an orchid.

And now, over the page, we will look at some of the many orchids you may find.



Do not pick
or disturb any
orchids you
find.





Pterostylis longifolia
Tall Greenhood.

Greenhoods

Botanical name- Pterostylis.

(pronounced .. tero-stilis)
These are all hooded flowers, but not all are green. You may find brownish or striped ones. Some have a single flower - others have a number of flowers on one stalk. This one may be quite tall.
The tongue will pop up into the hood if touched gently with a twig.

Spiders

Botanical name- Caladenia.

(cal-a-denia)
Most of the Caladenias have five long "spidery" segments, but a few have shorter, broader parts arranged in the same way. The Green-comb Spider illustrated is red, yellow and green, and is the most common one in the Ringwood area. The long green fringe along the edges of the labellum give it its name.

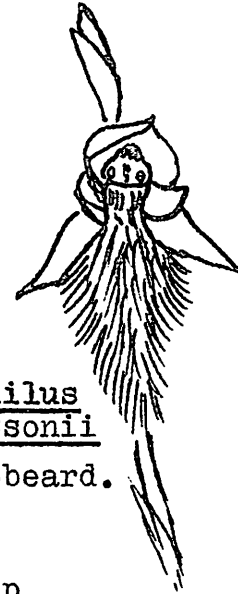
Caladenia dilatata.



Sun-Orchids

Botanical name:
Thelymitra
(thel-e-mi-tra)

Sun-orchids are easily mistaken, as the six floral segments appear to be the same. They may have only one flower, but most often there are many flowers on a tall stalk. They are most often blue, sometimes pink or yellow.



Calochilus robertsonii

Brown-beard.

Beards

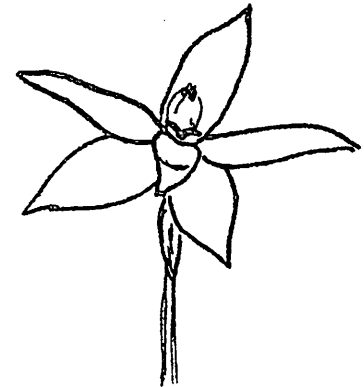
Botanical name- Calochilus

(calo-kilus)
There are six beard-orchids listed for Victoria, but only two are common. This one has a purplish-brown beard covering the labellum and two small, beady glands at the base of the column. The other is more reddish in color, has a long strap-like end to the labellum and no glands on the column base.

Waxlip

Botanical name- Glossodia

(gloss-odia)
At first glance you may mistake this beautiful mauve flower for a spider-orchid. The labellum is half white and there is a yellow v-shaped gland in the throat of the flower.



Glossodia major.



Diuris longifolia
Wallflower
Diuris.

Double-tails or Donkeys

Botanical name- Diuris

(di-u-ris)
These are usually yellow or yellow and brown. Two very beautiful Diuris - one white and the other a big purple one, are no longer easily

found, and may soon become extinct.



Caleana
major.

Large
duck-orchid.

Duck-orchids

Botanical name- Caleana.

(cale-arna)

This is a really topsy-turvy flower. The body of the "duck" is the column, the head is the labellum, and the other parts are very small by comparison. If you press lightly on the "beak" of the bird, the head twists into the body.

The strange shapes of orchids are designed for one purpose - to trap an insect in such a way that in escaping, it will carry the pollen sacs with it to the next flower it visits, but that is another story.

In reading all about these flowers and by looking very closely at them when you find them, you may be able to work out how insects are trapped within them.

* * * * *

Ed. In my Nature library I found that these books have information on orchids in them; you will probably find them in you school library.

1. N. Mass, "Australian Wildflower Magic".
2. T. F. Harris, "Wildflowers of Australia".
3. J. Galbraith, "Wildflowers of Victoria".
4. G. R. Cochrane, "Flowers and Plants of Victoria".

The other day I was lucky enough to see a film called "Shadow of Progress". Have you seen it? It was made by the B.P. petroleum company and you may borrow it from the company to show at your school. I thought it was one of the best films on pollution that I had seen.

Parrots, etc.

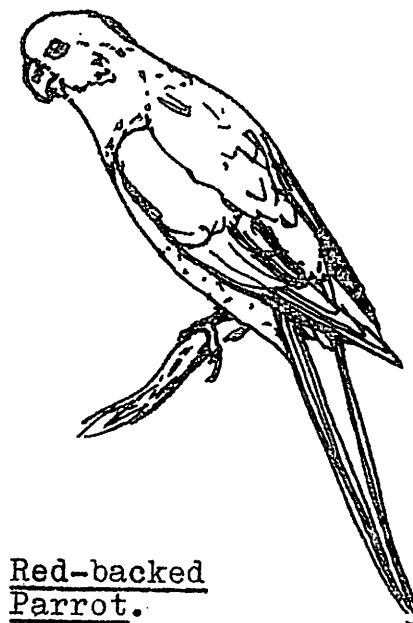
This month we present the first article from Mr. Delacca who is touring the eastern and northeastern area of Australia. This month his topic is "Australian Parrots".

MANY CENTURIES AGO when man was busy in his search for new lands to explore, of all bird groups, possibly none excited him more than the parrot-cockatoo group. Sailors, on their return from the new lands, were full of wondrous tales of the splendour and richness of the tropics and the south seas. To give emphasis to their stories they often returned with a fine example of the bird life of lands visited. Invariably, the example was a richly coloured parrot or cockatoo - the "Pretty Polly" of many a boy's adventure yarn.

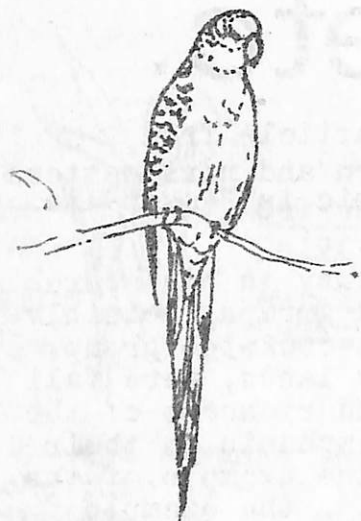
At present I am enjoying a holiday tour of Eastern Australia and on our second day "on the track" we stopped for lunch in the mallee scrub about thirty miles south of Mildura.

The first two curious birds to alight nearby were- you've guessed it - a pair of parrots. In this case they were "red-backed parrots"; or as I like to call them: "Mallee red-rump".

This species is very widespread over most of the inland parts of Eastern Australia, so you will have no trouble finding him when next you are up this way; or perhaps, as in my case, he will find you.



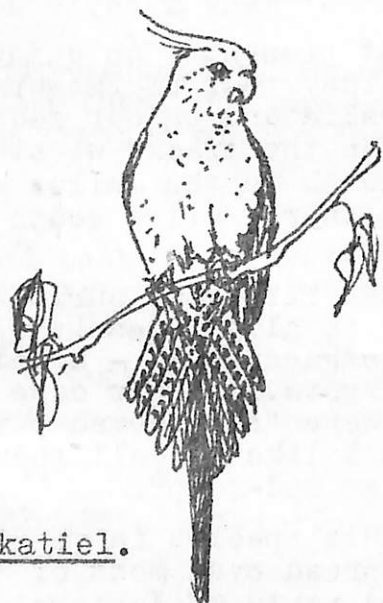
Red-backed
Parrot.



Budgerygah.

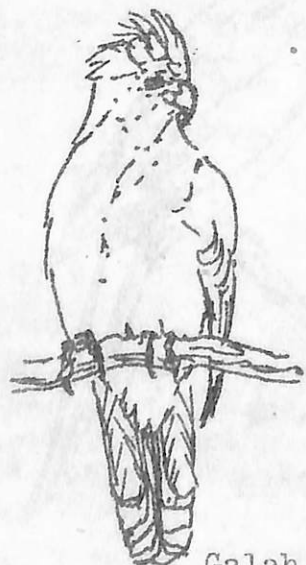
A few days later we were visiting Mootwingee, which is eighty-odd miles north from Broken Hill, and is an historic site of aboriginal artistry. My children were amazed to find wild budgies there. Like many city children, they thought that budgies were only found in cages.

The budgerygah is a species that is found in huge flocks in inland Australia. Its colours in the wild are green, mottled with darker greens, black and browns.



Cockatiel.

Easily the most common bird of any species is the galah. What a picture they make as they wheel in the blue, first pink, then grey!



Galah.

Another parrot of the dry inland is the ringneck. This is rather a larger bird, but a very handsome one. It is easy to see how he received his name.

Some members of this family are called Rosellas. Have you ever wondered how this name came about? It is said that when these birds were first seen they were called Rosehillers after Rosehill (a Sydney suburb) where they were first seen. You can see how this was shortened to Rosella. So the next time you look at the label on your sauce bottle you will know how it came to be there.



Ring-neck parrot.

Other members of the parrot family that we have seen on our travels have been the Sulphur-crested and Major Mitchell Cockatoos, Eastern Rosellas and Grass Parrots.

Well we certainly hope to see many more varieties of these colourful birds as our journey continues through North-central New South Wales and Queensland. They may be different from those varieties that we see in Southern Victoria, but their habits are much the same.

See what you can find out about the feeding and nesting habits of parrots.

1. Would you say that these birds were useful to man?
 2. How do they obtain and eat their food?
 3. You may be able to explore story books for them.
 4. Write your own story with a parrot in it.
- Don't forget "Australian Birds" by Robin Hill and "Australian Parrots" by J.M. Foreshaw are two books that will be of tremendous help to you.

Things to Look



Daviesia
virgata

During October, if you can find some bushland, you will find many of the pea-flower shrubs in blossom.

Many of these varieties of native plant are known as "Eggs and Bacon" or by similar names.

The two that I have drawn for you this month are Daviesia virgata or Twiggy Bitter-pea, and Platylodium obtusangulum or Common Flat-pea.

Watch for these plants when you are walking through the bush and look very closely at the shapes of their seed pods.



Platylodium
obtusangulum



Acacia armata.

Hedge Wattle or Acacia armata may still be found in some places. It has small sharp thorns amid its foliage.

You may be lucky enough to find a small bird nesting in the bush; if so, please do not harm it.

For in Oct.

As you know, October is Bird Month, and you may be able to find many birds and their nests. Some of the varieties you will nodoubt find are:

Willie Wagtail

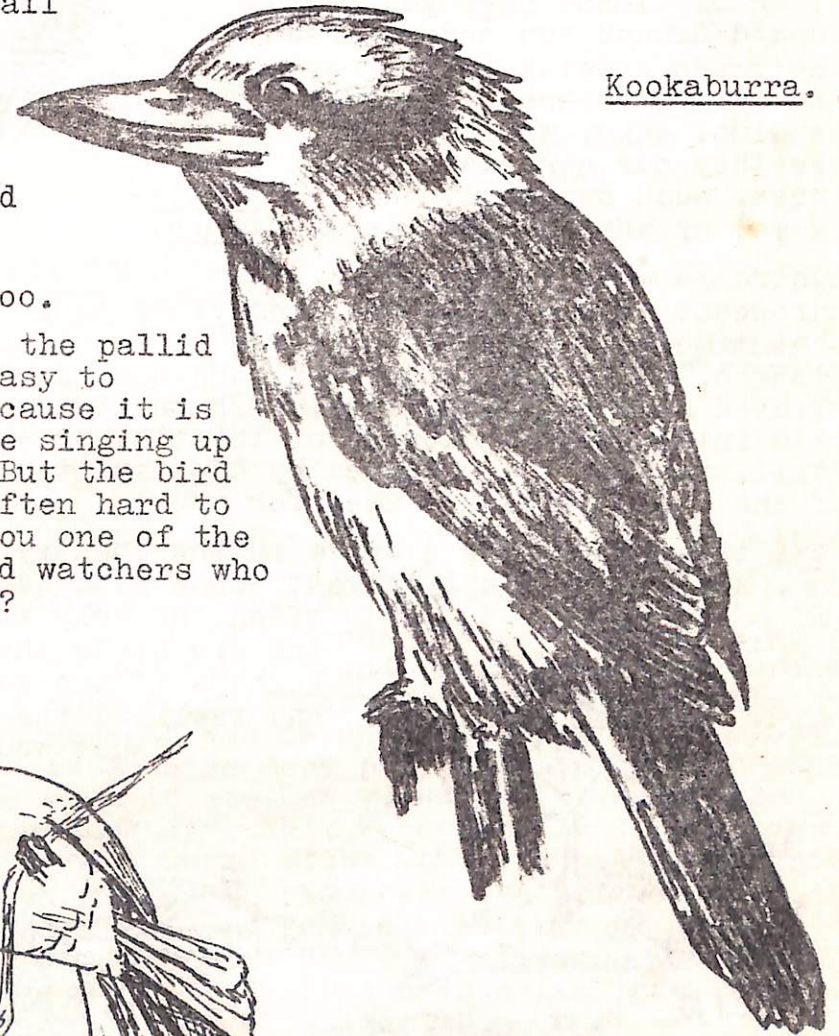
Southern
Yellow
Robin

Grey
Butcher-bird

Kookaburra

Pallid Cuckoo.

The song of the pallid cuckoo is easy to remember because it is like someone singing up the scale. But the bird itself is often hard to find. Are you one of the patient bird watchers who has seen it?



Kookaburra.



Grey Fantail.

Native Plants

THE NEED FOR PRESERVATION.

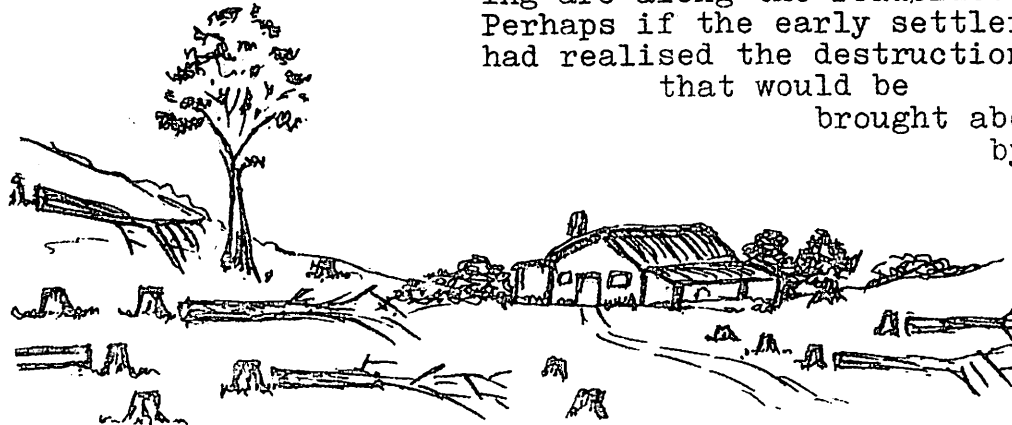
Do you live in the country, or in a city suburb, or in a block of flats? Have you ever looked around you and noticed the trees growing in your area? Are they European trees such as elms, oaks, willows, or are they our own Australian trees, such as eucalypts (gums) or acacias (wattles)?

Bottle-brush.



Australia was settled by Europeans less than two hundred years ago, and during that time many millions of acres of bushland has been cleared, often without reason, and now much of that cleared land is lying waste. Perhaps it is overgrown with introduced blackberry or thistle. Or what is worse still, perhaps it is eroded by deep gullies, with much of the top soil washed away for ever.

Next time you go for a drive in the country look around you, and you will notice vast areas with hardly a tree; often the only trees remaining are along the roadsides. Perhaps if the early settlers had realised the destruction that would be brought about by



Good country devastated by bad farming.

droughts, fires, rabbits and overstocking they would not have cleared so much of the land. If pockets of natural bushland had been left, for example in the valleys, and on the mountains, these areas would have provided a cross-section of all areas; they would have preserved native trees, shrubs and wildflowers, and they would have provided sanctuaries for native animals and birds.

As it is, several species of native animals have already become extinct. In the early days some animals were ruthlessly hunted. Did you know

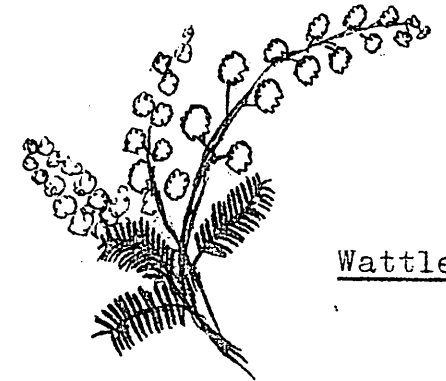
that in 1924
2,000,000
koala skins were sold?

How can we help to preserve what we have left? First of all we can help by learning about our country and its animal and plant life. We can read, observe, talk to our parents and friends, and encourage them to be interested too. The "Little Desert" was saved from becoming farmland because so many people helped the government to see how valuable it was as a sanctuary. Next week we will talk about how you can start your own native garden.

You see, another way that you can help is by growing your own native garden. Even one native tree is better than none.



Apple-berry.



Wattle.



Bluebell.

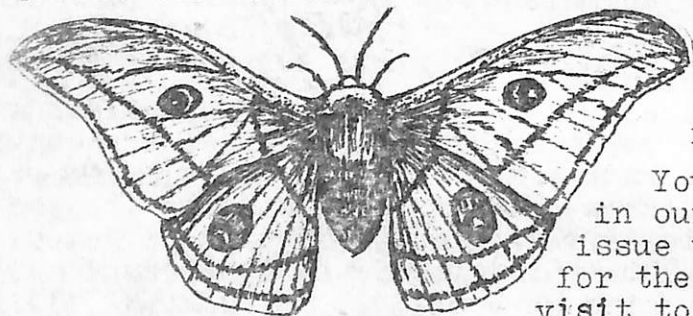


Flannel.

Prize Letter

This month our prize for the best letter goes to Fiona Sanderson of Fintona Girls' School. Fiona writes:

Some weeks ago we found a cocoon on a rose bush. We kept it in an open bottle on the kitchen window-sill. Tonight we heard a knocking sound coming from the inside of the cocoon and soon the moth had hatched out. His body was very large but his wings were all folded up. It took over an hour for the wings to flatten out. Inside the cocoon was the old skin from the caterpillar.



Ed. Thank you Fiona, we hope you enjoy your "Periwinkle" nature book.

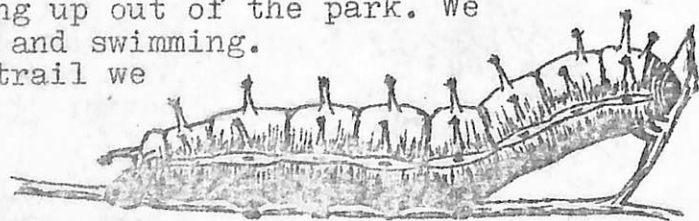
You will remember that in our National Parks issue we offered a prize for the best letter on a visit to one of our National Parks. Well we will not be

judging the best letter until well into 1972, but this month we received two very good letters that both have a very good chance of winning. The first is from Susan Brownsea, and she writes:

In January this year my family and I camped at Fraser National Park. It is 90 miles north-east of Melbourne, and is situated on Lake Eildon. We camped around at Devil's Cave for a week. The weather was lovely and hot.

We went on many walks, climbing the ridges surrounding Collier Bay; we had beautiful views of Lake Eildon and the road winding up out of the park. We also went yachting and swimming.

On the Nature trail we saw an Echidna, a Black-tailed Wallaby, a....



4. Emperor Gum Caterpillar.

Wombat, lots of Grey Kangaroos and many ant mounds. Mum and Dad saw a snake near the Nature Trail, and thought it was a Copperhead.

We also saw about a dozen sheep that had strayed from a nearby property, so we reported it to the Ranger's wife, Mrs. Turner.

I think the best thing I like about Fraser is, when the kangaroos come down to eat near the campers; they seem so tame; it is just beaut to sit and watch them. We also saw a lot of joeys, they were cute. This time we didn't see koalas, but at other times we have seen some. On one of our walks we saw a lot of Wedge-tailed Eagles gliding in the sky around us. We also saw a lot of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos.

Fraser is a very nice place and we have been there many times.

Ed. And now, a letter from Anthony Brownsea of Blackburn-East Primary School. Anthony writes:

In early April this year I went to Wyperfeld National Park for a camping holiday, it is 280 miles from Melbourne. We stayed there for six days and every day was warm. We were too early for the wildflowers this time, but we did see two very pretty flowers; Daddy said they were a Correa and an Astroloma.

We also saw lots of kangaroos and emus; the emus came to drink just near our tent and there were lots of brightly coloured parrots about. One day on a drive to Back Flat we saw hundreds of bees drinking water.

I think that the best thing was when I saw two lowans near their nest. We all sat and watched them for half an hour and Mummy took two photos of them and they were making funny grunting noises. Each time we go to Wyperfeld we always walk lots of miles to see a big, beautiful red gum. It is called Be-al and is hundreds of years old. On the trunk of the tree we saw two tiny geckoes; they were funny little things.

In October we hope to go there again because we like it so much.

* * * * * October, 71. * 15.

Feeder

In answer to many requests we are re-presenting the 1969 article on the construction of a bird-feeder.

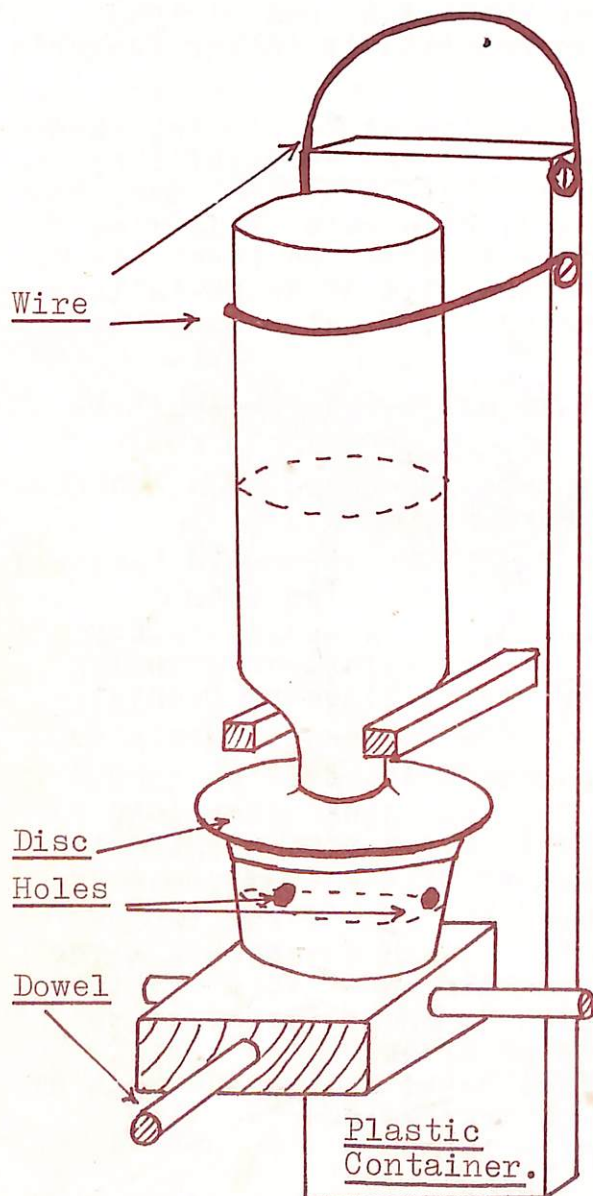
At Blackburn Lake Primary School, it is not uncommon to see six or seven "Greenies" or a couple of Red Wattle birds vying for next turn at the bottle.

MATERIALS: $\frac{1}{2}$ " timber, bottle - neck just over 1 inch long, rubber disc from car tube, small plastic container with tight lid, hole in lid for neck of bottle. $\frac{5}{8}$ " dowels for perches, small holes in container just above liquid level, wire to secure bottle to frame.

MENU: 1 lb. raw sugar
1 lb. honey
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ pints water.

Mix together and stir over low heat until sugar is dissolved. This nectar will keep in refrigerator for weeks. To feed birds, mix in ratio of 1 part nectar to 2 parts water.

Make one for school and one for home.



Feeding Bottle on Frame.