HA

Ringwood Inspectorate

Volume 10

Nature NOTES

Primary School 4860 Blackburn Lake

Red Capped Robin

6 Cents

No 4

P.O. Box 30, Nunawading, 3131.

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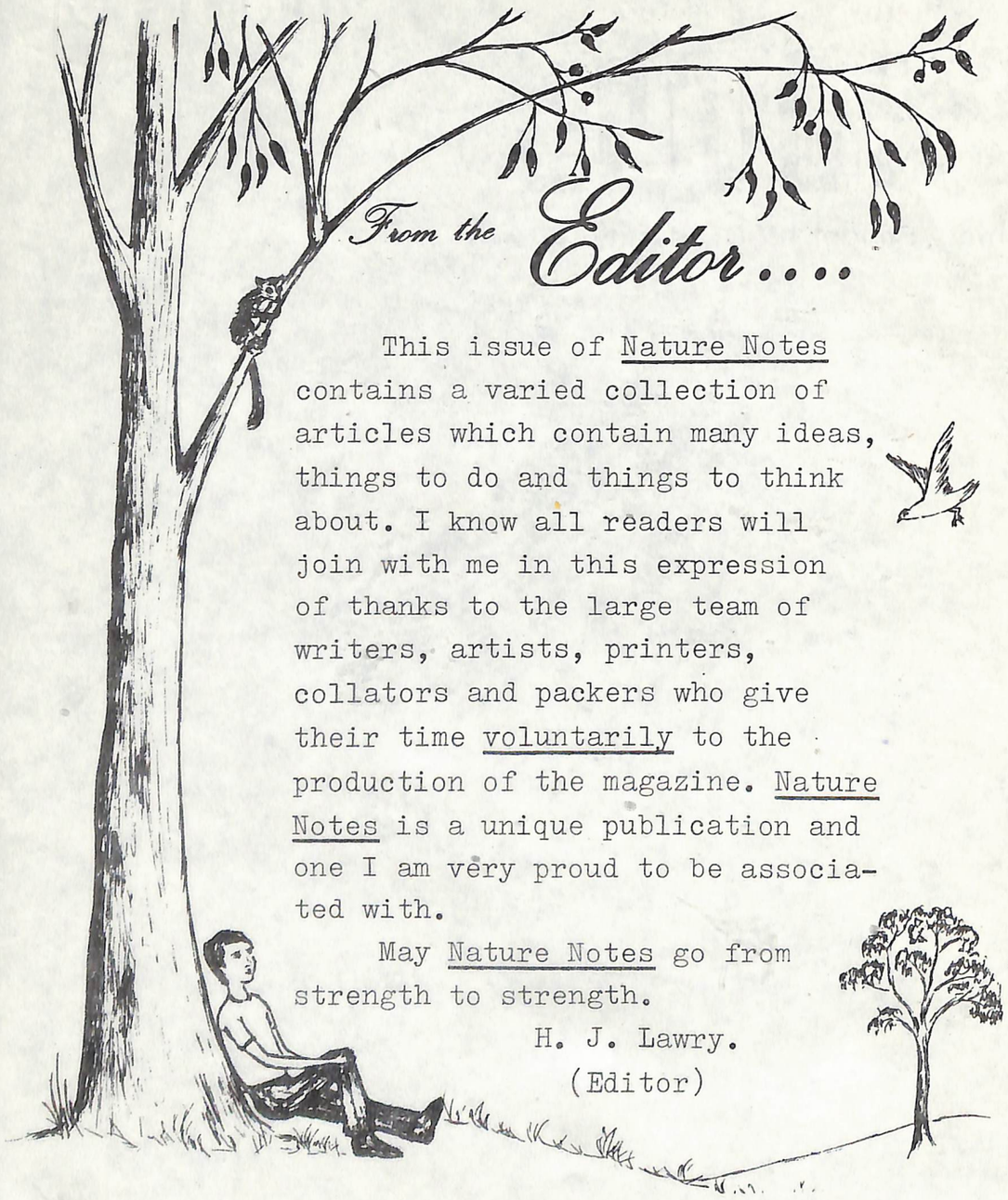

From the Editor....

This issue of Nature Notes contains a varied collection of articles which contain many ideas, things to do and things to think about. I know all readers will join with me in this expression of thanks to the large team of writers, artists, printers, collators and packers who give their time voluntarily to the production of the magazine. Nature Notes is a unique publication and one I am very proud to be associated with.

May Nature Notes go from strength to strength.

H. J. Lawry.
(Editor)

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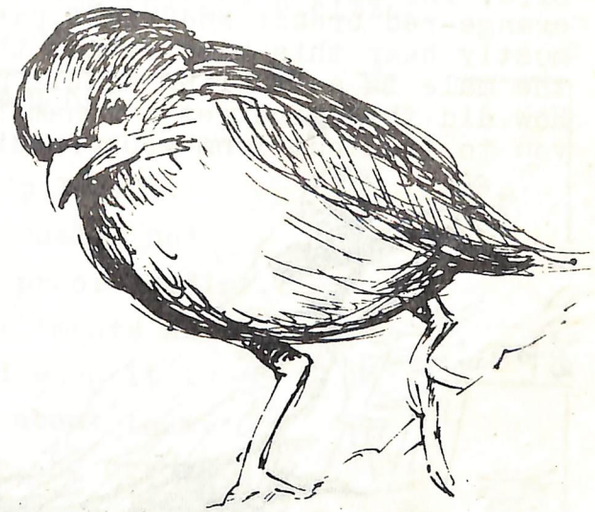
CATEGORY B.

Feathered Friends

Although winter is not always the best time of the year to observe birds,it is a good time to read about some of them so that you know what to look for in the spring and summer months. This month I am going to write about four birds that interest me very much: the Red-capped Robin, the Mistletoe Bird, the Rainbow Bird and the Lowan or Mallee Hen.

The Red-capped Robin is one bird you can observe in the cold months. Our Australian Robins belong to a different family from the European Robins after which they were named. Aren't these little insect eaters a joy to



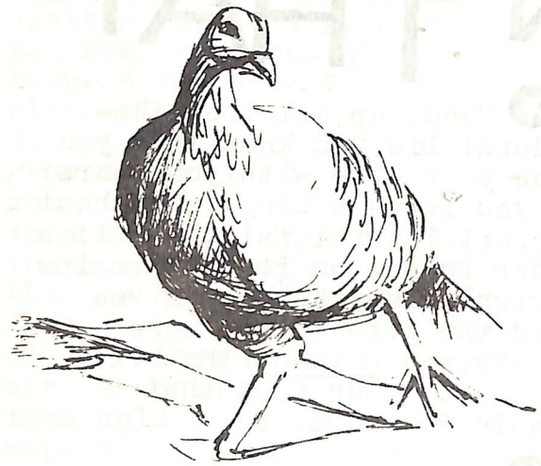
Red-capped Robin.

to see? Not all of them have a red cap of course, the Red-cap being but one of five species, all of which share in common a brightly coloured breast. Mrs. Red-cap is a very drab little bird. She lays her 2 - 3 bluish green, dark speckled eggs in a tiny cup-shaped nest which is only about 1½" in diameter and about 1" deep. Keep a watch out for this bird, or one of his cousins, in your area. Their nesting season is from July to December.

Mistletoe Bird

Another interesting small bird is the Mistletoe Bird. The part we see most of is the male's lovely orange-red breast and under parts of the tail. You mostly hear this bird rather than see it. The call of the male is a tinkling double note: a very sweet sound. How did this bird get its name? That's something for you to find out from your reading.

Rainbow Bird



Mallee Fowl

Finally, let us turn to the Mallee Fowl. These clever birds are about 2' in length and about 3½ to 4lbs in weight when fully grown. Why are they clever? Because they build an incubator mound to hatch their eggs instead of sitting on them like most other birds. The mound they build may be 14 feet in diameter and capable of hatching thirty or more eggs. See if you can find out more about this remarkable bird.

Bird observing is good fun - so is "bird reading", for in this way you benefit from the experiences of others. Don't forget though, that only through actual observing can new discoveries be made. Don't be content with other people's observations; try making your own. Who knows, you might make some new and exciting discovery and become famous!

COMMENT

Sometimes errors occur in 'Nature Notes' and for this we apologise. Unfortunately there is usually not much time available for proof-reading, because of deadline commitments and often mistakes are found when it is too late to do anything about them.

Should you discover any errors, we would be grateful if you would neatly set matters right for us.

THIS 'N THAT

✪ Hands up all the bike-riders! Did you know that you ride your bike with your ears? If you leave a bicycle without support it will fall, but if a rider is put on it, it remains upright. In other words you hold the bike up, or more simply, you balance the bike and it is your ears that enable you to do so.

✪ It is thought that our sense of hearing has "grown" around an existing organ, which gives us our sense of balance which in turn tells us where the outside world is in relation to our bodies. It is the inner ear that contains the balancing mechanism - three tiny semi-circular canals which function something like your dad's spirit level. In effect, when the head is moved the fluid in the canals moves and sends messages to the brain, which in turn sends a message to the muscles asking them to restore your balance. You may have watched a tight-rope walker. Did you notice how he keeps his head perfectly still? Can you tell why?

If you have ever been spun around you will have experienced a rather unpleasant sensation - do you know the topsy - turvy feeling I mean? See if you can work out what causes this odd sensation.

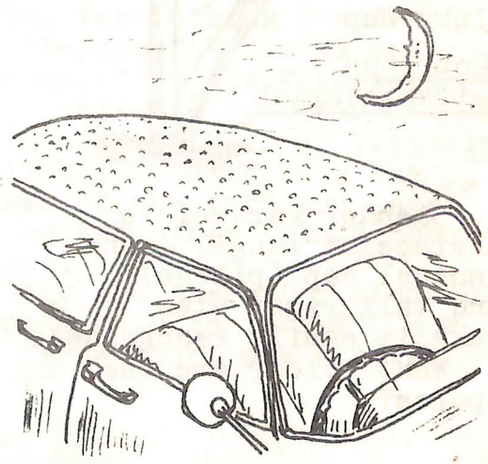
Semi-circular Canals.

✪ When mum hangs the clothes out to dry, have you ever wondered what happens to the water in the clothes? Does it just disappear? Some drips to the ground, but most of it changes its form from a liquid to a gas which mixes with the air - water vapour is thename given this gas. The fact that clothes dry quicker on warm days shows that warm air can hold more water vapour than cold air. However, even warm air eventually becomes saturated and can hold no more. If it is cooled it must release some of the moisture.

✪ It is winter now and we have found lately that the warm days have been followed by cool nights with a resultant dampness on anything that is exposed at night. We call these droplets dew. On very cold nights they freeze and become frost. If many clouds are present, the warmth is unable to escape and the air remains warm enough to retain its water vapour, so little or no dew forms.

✪ Try this. Bring a glass of ice-cold water into a warm room. What do you notice on the outside of the glass? Why? Can you see now why gardeners cover their plants on clear, cold and still nights? Why is there often little or no dew when a cool change with cold winds follows a warm period? Remember that only when air is cooled can it be made to release its moisture.

Good thinking!



Things To Look For—

Which of these fungi have you found?

Russula emetica "The Sickener" is so called because it has a poisonous reputation. It has a bright red cap which gradually fades. The cap may be sticky.

Inky Cap
Coprinus atramentarius

Slender Parasol is a graceful fungi. The conical cap (pileus) and tall rigid stem make it easily recognised.
What colour are the spores?

Russula emetica
"The Sickener"

The Inky Cap does not last very long when it is picked as the gills quickly blacken and slowly turn into a dark liquid. Apparently this dark liquid was once used as a substitute for ink and so arose the name for this fungi. There are several other fungi which have this habit also.
Have you found "Shaggy Cap"?

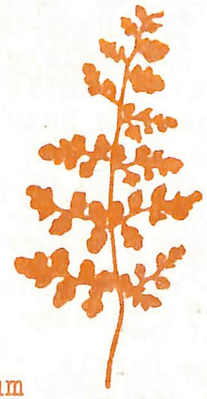
Slender Parasol Mushroom
Lepiota gracilenta

in JUNE!

Brown Hawk

How many hawks do you know? Write them down on a piece of paper.
Diurnal birds of prey are all useful birds as they help keep down many enemies of the farmer's pastures, and stored grain and crops. It is a great pity that many are shot on sight before any thought is given to the good that they may do.
Have you watched them catch their prey? What was it? How can some hawks and eagles rise high in the sky without apparently flapping their wings?
Is "A Guide to the Hawks of Australia" published by the Bird Observers' Club in your school library? You will find this very helpful in your study.

Fishbone Fern
Blechnum nudum



Maiden-hair Fern

Autumn and Winter are good times for looking for ferns.
"Ferns of Victoria and Tasmania" by N.A.Wakefield and published by Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria will help you to know the names of the fern you have found and other things about ferns.
Why are there two kinds of fronds on some ferns? How do ferns start new plants?

Night-beat!

This month we are going to talk about birds which do all of their hunting during the hours of darkness and spend the day resting in a hollow or asleep on the limb of a tree. These birds are called NOCTURNAL PREDATORS. Can you guess why?

To be able to hunt at night there must be some very special features about these creatures. I wonder if you can find out what these features may be! Naturally, this will be hard to do by observation, as the birds are extremely hard to find in daylight and when found, are usually motionless. So books will be your main allies. Here are a few clues:

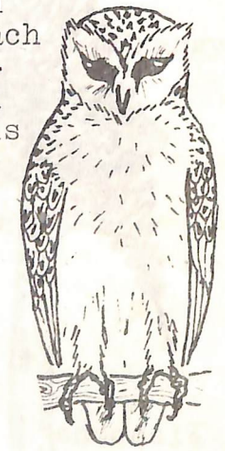
The first special feature concerns the eyes. How are they different from other birds? What effect does this produce?

Secondly, the flight is very silent - why? Most of the larger daylight-flying birds make some noise, but not these night-shift workers.

There are two distinct types in this specialized bird group. Firstly, the frogmouths and nightjars; and secondly, the owls!

Boobook Owl

The owls are divided into two groups - each group being distinguished by its facial disc. The Hawk-Owls have an incomplete facial disc, while the Barn-Owls have the eyes near the centre of each complete facial disc. The largest member of the former group is the Powerful Owl which is fairly rare in Vic., though I did see one once near Yellingbo.



Barn Owl

All owls nest in hollows in tree trunks or limbs. Find two distinctive features about their eggs? The Boobook Owl deserves a special mention because of its well known call which we have translated as "more-pork", or better known as "mopoke".

It has been argued that another bird, the Tawny Frogmouth, also makes a "mopoke" call. Perhaps you can help to settle this argument by observation and reading! In any case, the Tawny Frogmouth is an interesting bird. Once I found a nest in a tree in Wattle Park, and what a problem it was to see this camouflage expert! During the day it remains in a curious 'frozen' position on the tree branch. The Frogmouth, though mainly an insect eater, will feed on mice. It should be easy to discover why it is so well named.

The Camouflage Expert.

Nightjar.

The final group of night-hunters are the Nightjars, of which two of the three species are found in Victoria. The famous Whip-poor-will of America is also a member of this family.

These birds do not build a nest, but lay their eggs on bare ground or among pebbles which match their colouring. Nightjars fly about at dusk catching insects on the wing. Their wide mouth is ideal for this purpose. During daylight they rest on the ground. One of the nightjars has an extraordinary call which may cause some anxiety if heard when alone in the bush on a dark night.

In all, nocturnal predators are a very interesting group of birds and one that is certainly worth a much closer study.

STARTING POINT • A BICYCLE

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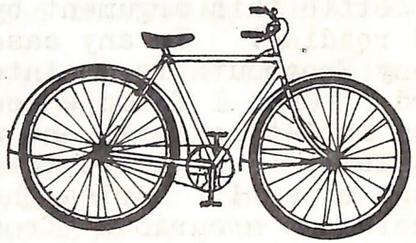
Many boys and girls of your age now own a bicycle. See if you can find out more about your "fun machine". What is the frame made of? How can metals be bent into required shapes? Why don't they crack?



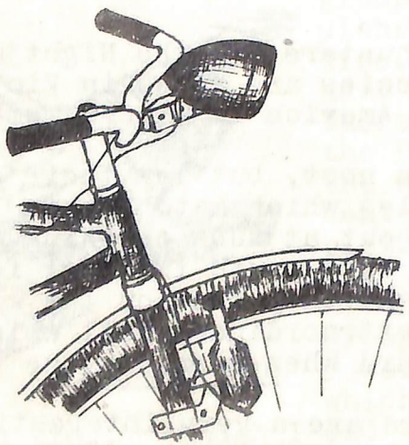
The chain fits over two sprockets- a large one and a small one. What would happen if they were both the same size?

What prevents the air from escaping through the valve?

How far will your bicycle move in one complete turn of the wheel?

How do your brakes operate?

How much air pressure should be in your tyres?



How does the light work?

Where does the power come from?

Why must you lubricate various parts of your bicycle?

THINGS TO DO.

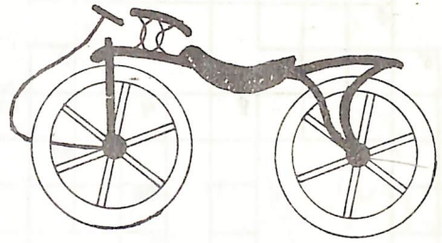
Draw some of these earlier bicycles:

The Walk-Along.

The Boneshaker.

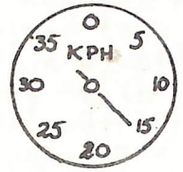
The Tandem.

The Penny-farthing.



The most famous bicycle race is the Tour de France. What makes it so famous?

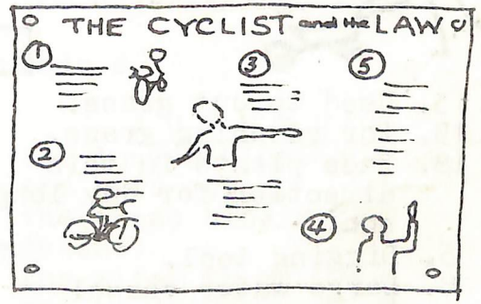
If you want to drive a motor car you must pass a test. Make up a test for learner bicycle riders.



Can you discover the speed at which your friend is riding? How many ways can this be done?

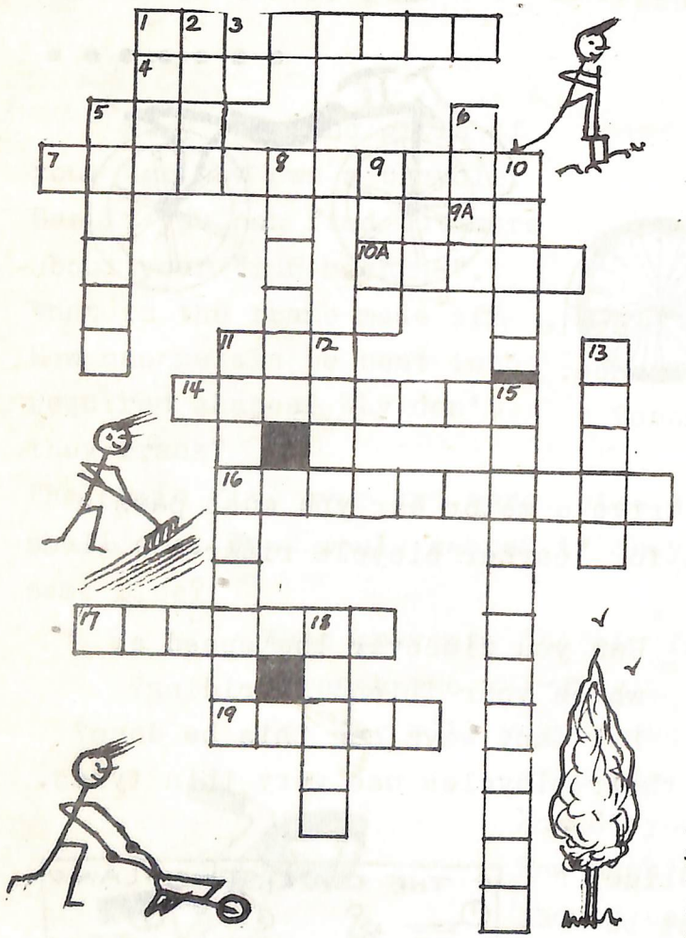
Those who race their bicycles use very thin tyres. Why?

What are the Police Regulations that must be obeyed by cyclists? Make a list of them for your classroom wall.



Visit the bicycle section at the Melbourne Museum. A famous Australian's bicycle used to be there- it may be still there. Whose?

Crossword



ACROSS

1. Used to trim lawn edges.
4. Lawns are nice to ___ on.
5. Plants and humans need plenty of _____.
7. Type of lever with a wheel on the end.
10A. Weeders get sore _____.
11. You must have one to stand on.
9A. Point of the compass
14. It's much easier with sprinklers!
16. Big help in identifying plants.
17. Turning the soil over.
19. Small type of tree.

DOWN

1. This is one.
2. Used to get straight edges.
3. That is (abbrev.)
6. Flexible pipe for water.
10. Gardeners hate them.
11. Clippers are used to cut these.
12. Microscopic organism.
13. Used to cut grass.
15. For catching grass.
18. Face plants in this direction for day long sun.
5. Digging tool.
8. Large water vessel
9. Levelling tool.

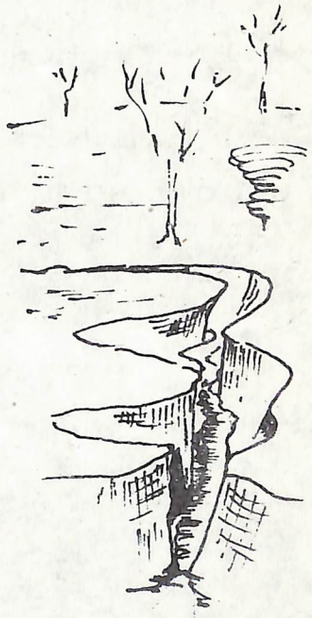
Prize Letter

23 Blenheim St.
Glenroy, 3046.
13/4/'73.

Dear Sir,

I recently read what was in Nature Notes about conservation. Our grade has discussed the different types and how we can help prevent problems.

We found that the different types are soil, fauna, flora and forest conservation. In our work we learnt that soil should be conserved because of erosion which is caused by strong winds which blow the soil away. Also water erosion is caused by the incorrect ploughing of hilly land or when bare earth is exposed to the forces of moving water. We discovered that after rain has fallen water rushes down river beds and if the banks have been cleared the water takes the sides with it.



We learnt many other things but I cannot state them all in this letter. On the whole we learnt a lot of very interesting things and something Ithought very important is that conservation concerns us all. (My underlining. Ed.)

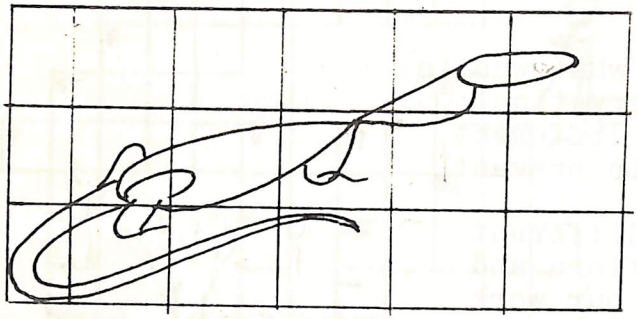
Yours sincerely,
Marlene Griffiths Grade 6.

As well as a prize-letter, this month we have a prize-poem. Periwinkle books will be sent to Marlene Griffiths and Susan Weickhardt of Vermont.

AUTUMN

See the leaves blowing,
And the hats going,
All the trees blowing,
Roundabout.
All the kites in the sky,
All the birds ready to fly,
All the trees waving,
As they go by.

Let's Draw a GOANNA



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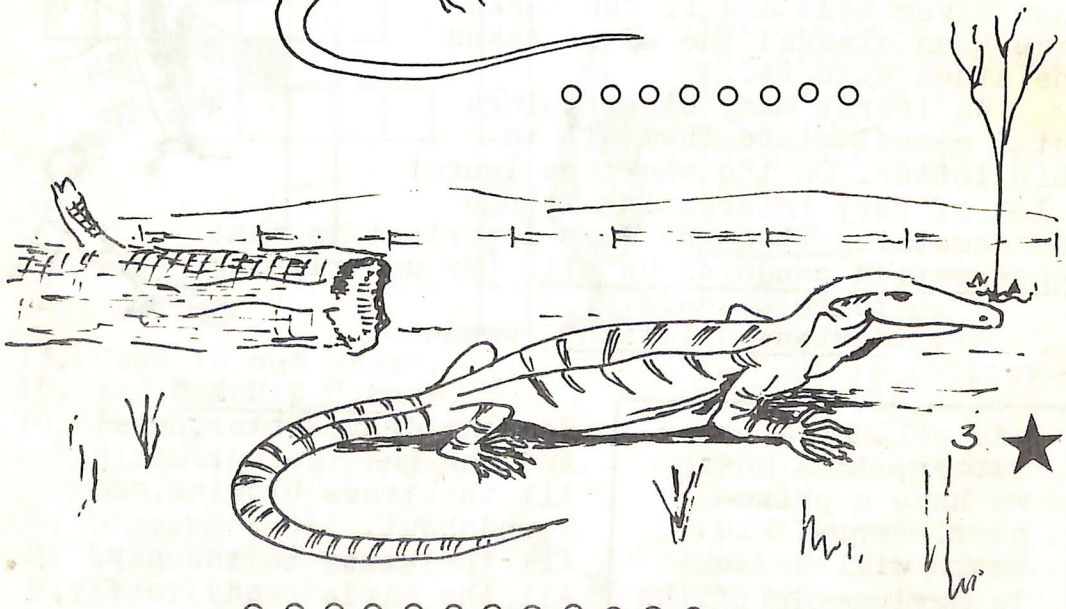

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