

Ringwood Inspectorate

Volume 10

# Nature NOTES

NO. 10



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P.O. Box 30, Nunawading, 3131.

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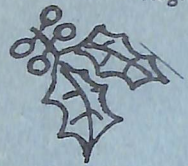
From the  
*Editor....*

The end of another year is almost with us again, and what an interesting year it has been as far as Nature Notes is concerned. Our new feature, 'On The Spot' has so far proved both popular and informative and will I hope, become a regular feature.

This month, Periwinkle Book Prizes have been awarded to two contributors: Ken Collishaw and Matthew Smith. Congratulations boys ! On page 10 you will find two more pages of contributions by readers, which I am sure you will find most enjoyable. Could this be the start of a new feature ? That remains to be seen, but in the mean-time, keep your letters coming, won't you.

Best wishes for a happy Christmas and safe holiday.

H.J.Lawry.



Brolga

Cover Design  
Mrs.M.Sharpin.

**IN THIS ISSUE ....**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| 'On the Spot.'        |     |
| Ken Collishaw         | 3.  |
| 'The Green Tree Ant.' |     |
| Matthew Smith         | 5.  |
| 'Around the Gramps'   |     |
| L.Delacca             | 6.  |
| 'Things To Look For.' |     |
| F.J.C. Rogers         | 8.  |
| Contributions         | 10. |
| 'The Early Bird.'     |     |
| H.J.Lawry             | 12. |
| Crossword             | 14. |
| Mobiles               | 15. |
| 'Books For Christmas' |     |
| H.J.Lawry.            |     |



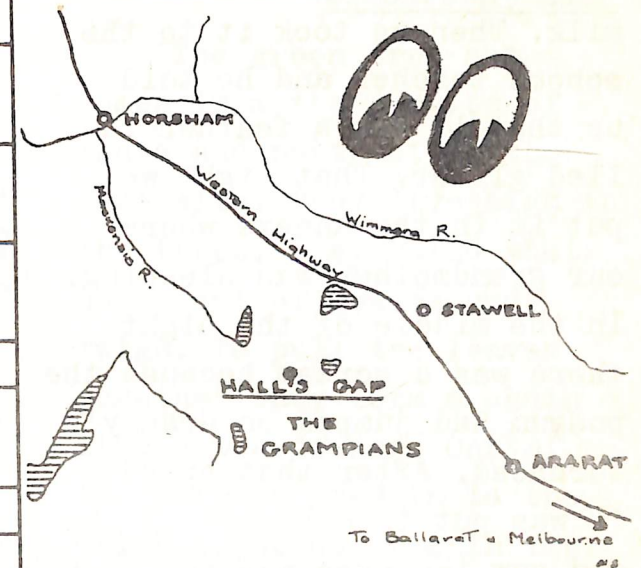
Ken Collishaw is a student at Laburnum Primary School.

Artists

Mrs.G.Hensler.  
Mrs.A.Shoobridge.  
Mrs.M.Sharpin.  
David Dawson.



# *On The Spot!*



The Grampians Area

A couple of years ago our family went to Hall's Gap in the Grampians. We were playing in the park when my brother Ross shouted that he had found a mouse, so I went over and saw a poor little creature lying in a rubbish bin. I told Ross that I thought it was a possum and he looked at its tail and saw that it was. We took it to the van and Dad and Ross took photos of it. Then we went to the Ranger's house, but he



wasn't there. The lady there told us to give it some warm milk. Then we took it to the school teacher and he told us that it was a feather-tailed glider. That night we put it in the annexe where our grandmother was sleeping. In the middle of the night there was a scream because the possum had jumped on Granny's forehead. After that episode it was put in a bucket in the van. Later on Mum woke up and saw two eyes peeping at her over the 'fridge. She chased it round the van, caught it and then we let it go.



We were very lucky to have this experience, because about the only time these creatures are seen is when the tree where they have made their home is cut down. This is because they usually move about at night, which explains why my glider clung to my jumper like a badge for most of the day without trying to get away.



Feather-tailed  
glider

## THE GREEN TREE ANT

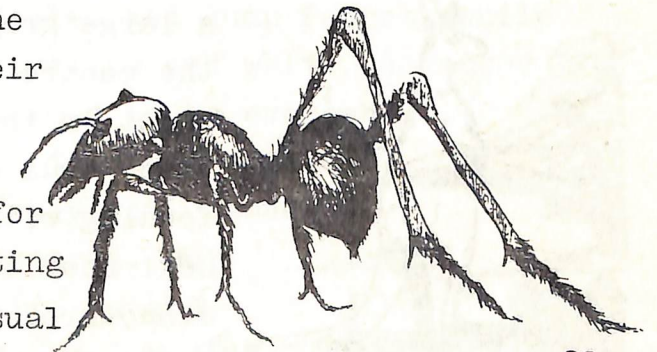
Matthew Smith.  
Grade 3.D.  
Blackburn Lake



The green tree ant comes from the jungles of India and parts of Northern Australia. They live high in the trees. They build their nests out of leaves and twigs. To pull the leaves together they form a chain like a tug-of-war. One of the workers goes in to the nursery and fetches a baby which is about to spin its cocoon.

When the leaves are close together, the worker with the baby in its jaws puts its head up close to the crack and squeezes the baby until the very sticky silk comes out of its mouth. It weaves back and forth until the leaves are stuck together. That is how the green tree ants make their nest.

.... Thank you Matthew for writing such an interesting letter about a very unusual creature. .... Ed.



D.D.



# Around the Gramps...

What a thrill it must have been for Sir Thomas Mitchell when he first gazed at a spectacular range of sandstone mountains in Western Victoria in 1836. They reminded him so much of his beloved Scotland that he gave them the name "Grampians". Mt. William, the highest peak, reaches 3,829 feet and altogether they extend for 50 miles in a north - south direction.



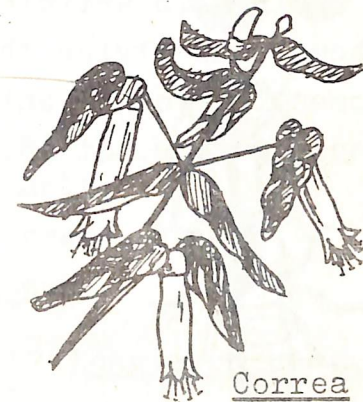
Along with thousands of other tourists, we spent a most enjoyable time there in the recent holidays. In spite of the wet weather we managed to see Victoria's greatest collection of spring wildflowers plus a large variety of bird-life.



Imagine our delight too, on seeing a large grey kangaroo feeding in the centre of the Hall's Gap oval, right in the middle of the town. Also, emus could be seen each day feeding with cattle in a paddock, next door to the caravan park. We discovered the emus' favourite food - the flowers of the pretty Flame

Heath or Astrolama. No wonder they love this shrub, for their scarlet flowers are rich in nectar and the fruit is large and succulent too.

On a visit to Jimmy's Creek we discovered acres of Victoria's brightest Grevillea - the one called Dimorpha. What a show it made ! A frequent visitor to this bush was the Yellow-winged honey-eater. We were delighted with his upside-down efforts to extract nectar from the grevillea and common Pink Heath.



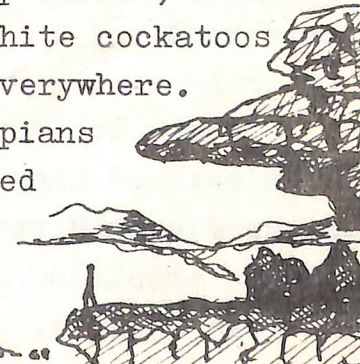
Correa

Another plant of interest was the Correa, much sought after by the honeyeaters, especially the Spinebill, one of our favourites. Rosellas were out in plenty too - mainly the Eastern and Crimson variety. A short visit to the Little Desert produced the Mallee Red Rump Parrot, while corellas and white cockatoos seemed to be everywhere.



Rosella

I cannot do justice to the Grampians on paper for they are truly well named as the Wonderland of Victoria. But don't take my word for it, go and see them for yourselves.





# GGGG THINGS TO LOOK FOR in TREES

In this article I want to tell you about some living things which make their homes in trees - animals that perhaps have escaped your notice.



Worker



Queen



Flying termite

enemies, quietly but voraciously eat away the heart of their host.

If you look under the loose bark of many trees such as the Murray River Red Gum, you are almost sure to find Huntsmen Spiders.



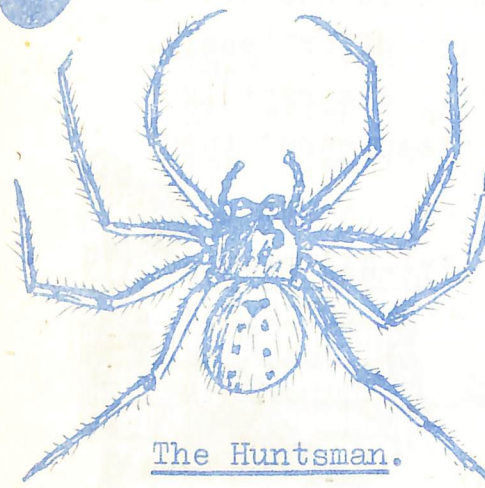
For the termite, or 'white ant' as it is often incorrectly called, the tree is not only a home, but a larder as well. In many cases their presence is not noticed until the tree is cut down. Then a large hollow called a pipe may be found extending throughout the trunk. Here the nest is built with the wood pulp excreted by the termites which, snugly protected from their



The Huntsmen share their bark home with many other small animals. Sometimes you will find several small Marbled Scorpions with their stinging tails cocked forward over their bodies. Handle with care.



Scorpion



The Huntsman.



Longicorn beetle

A pile of sawdust and blobs of sticky resin at the foot of an acacia or eucalypt will often tell us that another tree resident is home. The larvae of the woodmoth, drill holes deep into the trunk of these trees, while the larvae of the Longicorn beetles may spend up to two or three years burrowing away inside the tree before emerging as the beetle we know so well.



# Readers' Contributions

Our first letter is from Geoffrey Evans . Geoffrey is a pupil at Box Hill North Primary School, Victoria.

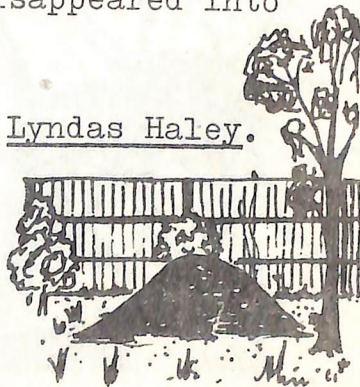
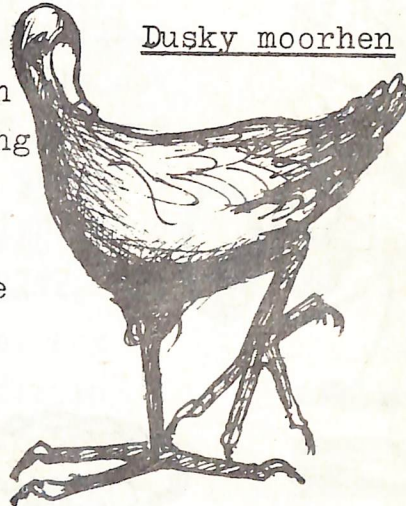
While I was down at Blackburn Lake recently, (in search of Nankeen Night Herons) I saw many interesting birds, a few of them for the first time. The most numerous seemed to be the Noisy Miners, Red and Little Wattlebirds, Welcome Swallows and various kinds of Rosellas and Parrots. But all the time I kept a close watch for the silhouettes of any Herons, but alas, though I looked in practically every tree surrounding the lake, I couldn't spot any.

As it was early in the morning, the lake was smothered with fog and mist, but close to one side a Black Duck and a Dusky Moorhen paddled effortlessly. As my father and I moved closer, they swam rapidly towards the centre of the lake and disappeared into the fog.

This interesting letter is from Lyndas Haley.

Some friends of ours who live at Glen Waverley had a heap of black soil at the back of their garden. Last spring they saw two birds about

Dusky moorhen



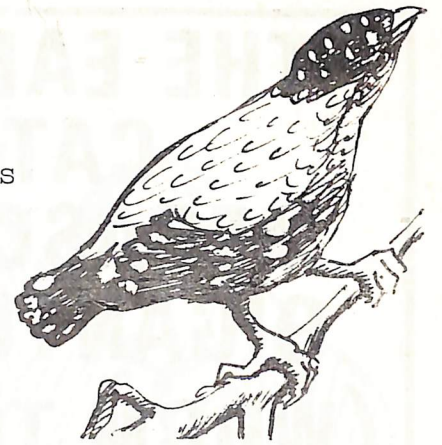
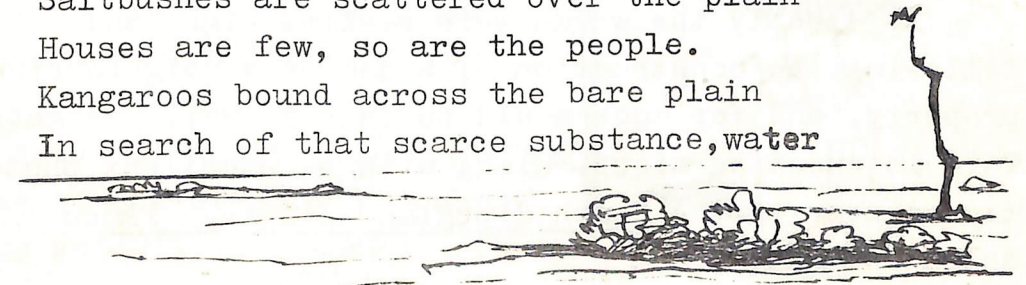
4 inches long, flying backwards and forwards from the soil. They crept up to them and identified them as Spotted Pardalotes from the Gould League book Birds of Urban Areas. As they didn't see them any more, they were afraid that cats had got them.

Later when they took soil from the heap, they found a Spotted Pardalote tunnel about 18 inches long which the birds had constructed. There was some grass at the end of the tunnel. In The Herald, (13 - 10 - '73) Graham Pizzey wrote that due to dry conditions, many Spotted Pardalotes did not nest last year.

Finally, we have a poem written by Vivienne Smith Grade 6 S, Norwood Primary School.

## THE OUTBACK

This is the barren outback of Australia  
The stark land stretches beyond the horizon  
The relentless Australian sun sears the land  
Saltbushes are scattered over the plain  
Houses are few, so are the people.  
Kangaroos bound across the bare plain  
In search of that scarce substance, water

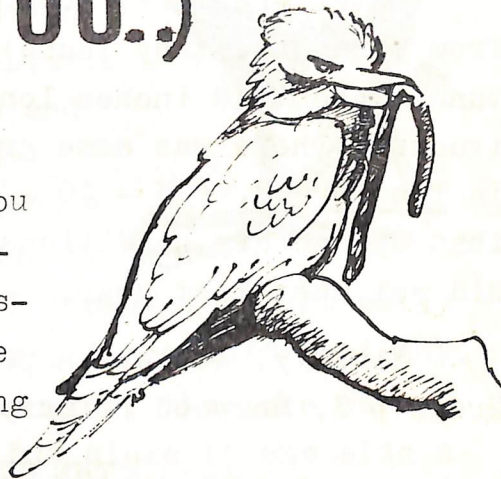




# THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES MEGASCOLOIDES GIGANTUS BASSI (WORM TO YOU..)

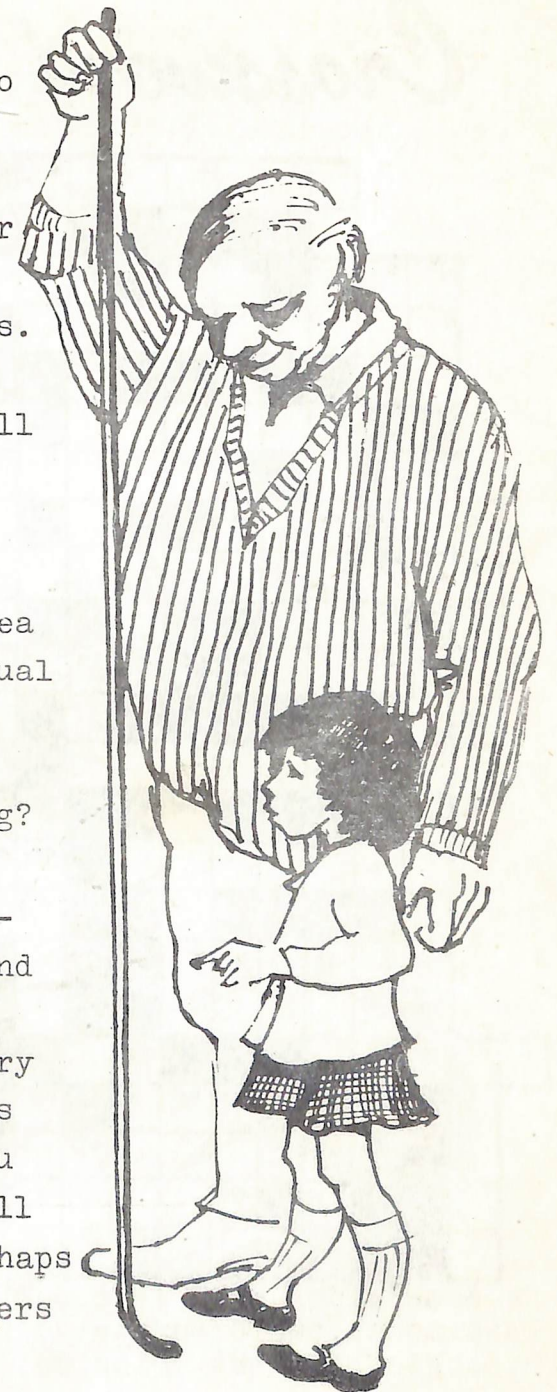
What has the kookaburra got in his beak ? If you think that he has a snake, you are wrong. Mr. Jack Worthington of Topiram in South Gippsland recently observed a tame kookaburra named 'Jacky' taking off with what he thought was a snake about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, but closer examination proved it to be a worm! This led Mr. Worthington to discover many similar specimens, one of them being eight feet in length.

Apparently the worms were seeking high land, following the construction of a dam on a neighbouring property, and for once could be fairly easily caught. This interesting story, along with an excellent photo may be seen in the South Gippsland Sentinel Times dated June 14, 1973.



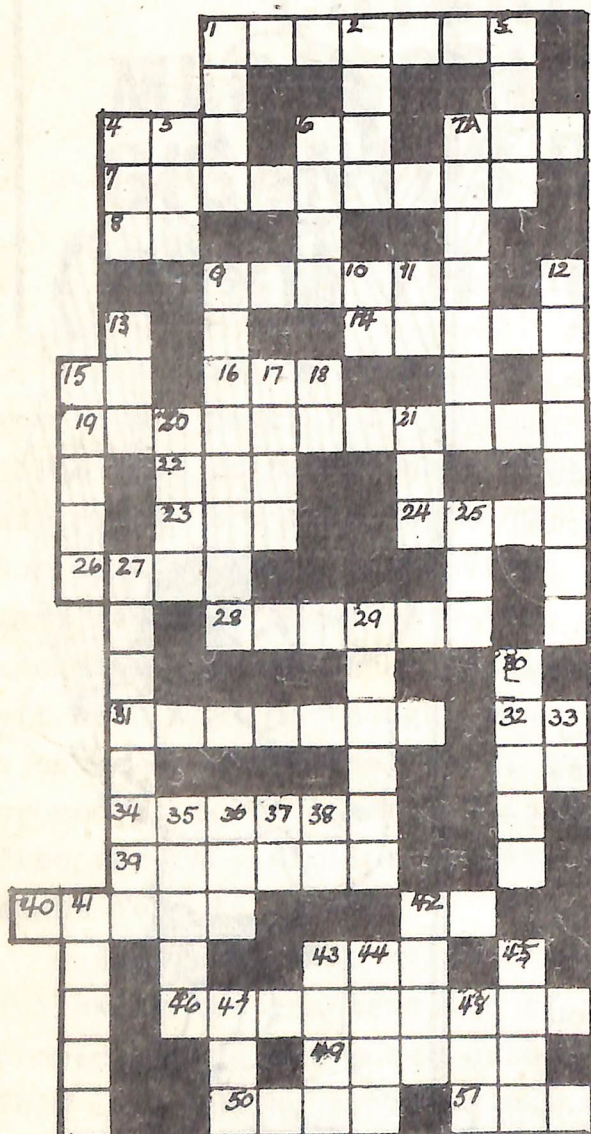
Pictured opposite is drawing which is similar to the photo mentioned above. Just for fun, measure out 8 feet on the floor of your classroom, so you can see just how long this worm was. How many cm is this ? Some Blackburn Lake children tell me that this is equivalent to 244 cm , so if you have been converted to metrics this will give you some idea of the length of this unusual creature.

Does it surprise you to think of a worm that big? Well, I'm pleased to tell you that the MGB is exclusively ours, because Gippsland is the only place in the world where he is found. Try to find out more about this unusual Australian - if you do, please write in and tell us about it won't you. Perhaps some of our Gippsland readers have actually seen one.





# Crossword



Some clues were left out last month, unfortunately. We apologise for the omission.

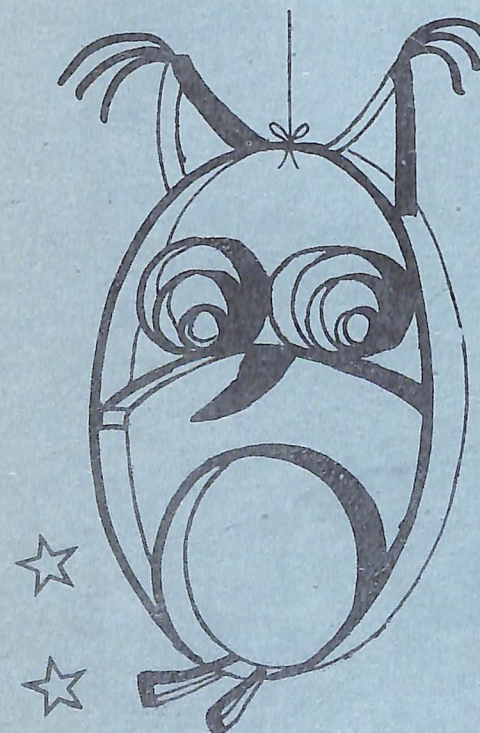
## Across

1. Sea creature, eight legs.
4. Digit.
6. Physical Education (init.).
- 7A. Used for cooling.
7. Large grasshoppers (joke)
8. Goes with "either you ... I" (two letters)
9. Barren place.
14. Heartless.
15. Thank you... baby talk.
16. Centre of our solar system.
19. The world around us.
22. Beginning of life.
23. Compass point.
24. Road-runner noise.
26. Not native-rabbit-like.
28. Forest guardian.
31. Anteater.
32. Opposite of out.
34. Creeping plant.
39. Sufficient.
40. Fun-time.
42. Knockout. (abbrev.)
43. Enemy.
46. Gun dog.
49. Girls' name.
50. Life ends.
51. Road material.

## Down

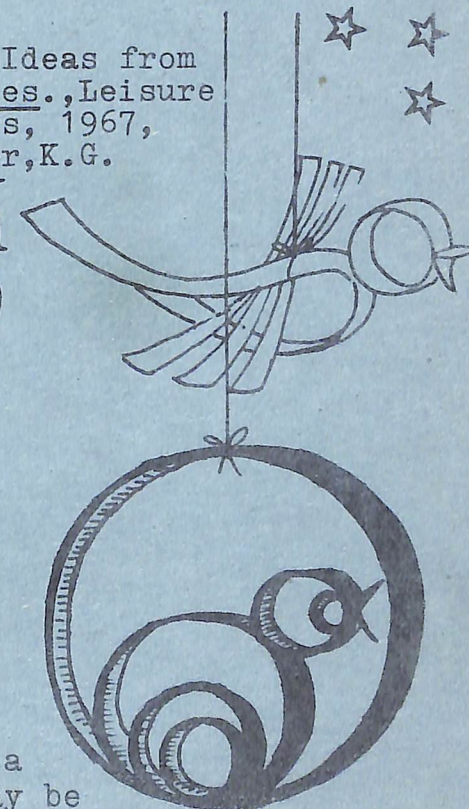
1. Opposite of closed.
2. O'er... Complete.
3. Large expanses of water.
4. Boxing term.
5. Used for rowing.
6. Narrow mountain path.
- 7A. Great wealth.
9. One who designs.
10. Short for 'Economics'

11. Famous car (initials)
12. Uniquely Australian.
13. Skin colour.
17. Encourage.
18. Negative.
20. Change course (slight)
21. Short for giant earth-worm. (Page 13)
25. Listening organ.
27. Echidna.
29. Aboriginal shelter.
30. Necessary in dark.
33. Negative.
35. Come in.
36. Shy.
37. Fr. 'where'
38. Popular sportscar.
41. Cross.
43. Not imprisoned.
44. Lubricates.
45. Small South Gippsland town.
47. Finish.
48. Animal doctor.
42. Keeps boat upright.



Ideas from  
Mobiles., Leisure  
Crafts, 1967,  
Herder, K.G.

# MOBILES

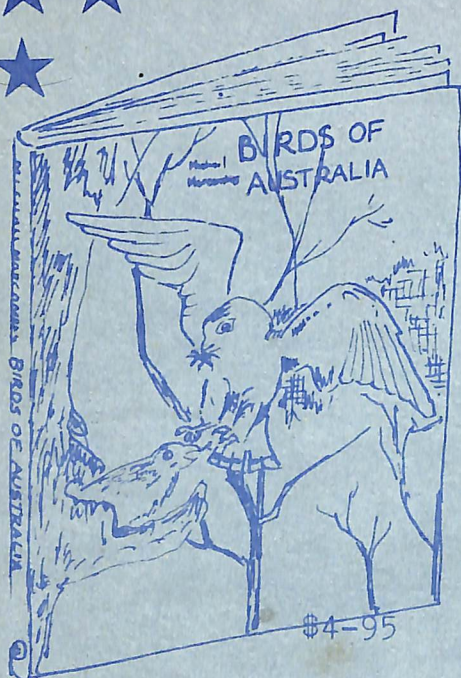


The owl above looks as though he really doesn't give a hoot! These quaint mobiles may be made from pasted circles of coloured paper.

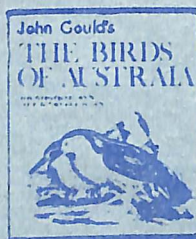


## BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

H.J. Lawry.



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New Titles



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Two books from the Blackburn  
Lake school library which I can  
thoroughly recommend are Native  
Trees of Australia by Mervyn  
Millet and Michael Morcombe's  
Birds of Australia. Mervyn Millet's  
book is one of the most useful  
books on Australian trees that I  
have seen. Michael Morcombe's book  
features superb colour plates of  
many native birds. For anyone  
interested in birds or bird photo-  
graphy, this book is a must.  
Publishers: Lansdowne , 1971.

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