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# nature notes

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# from the Edit



MR.H.J.LAWRY.



Hi! Welcome to Nature Notes for 1975. We should start the year by saying a BIG thank-you to Mr. Lawry for all the tremendous work he has put into Editing Nature Notes for the last three years. He is now the Vice Principal at Knoxfield Primary School and we all wish him well.

BOOK PRIZES for any letters or articles written by you that are printed in Nature Notes will again be given out this year- so we hope you'll write lots! (The address is on the front page.)

We are having trouble here at the printing office with Wally Wombat. He won't stay with his friends Wonderoo and James Snail on the back pages but he keeps getting himself into all sorts of places. Please just take no notice of him- and maybe he he'll go away. Apart from that we're looking forward to a great year.

K. Dyer. (The new Editor).

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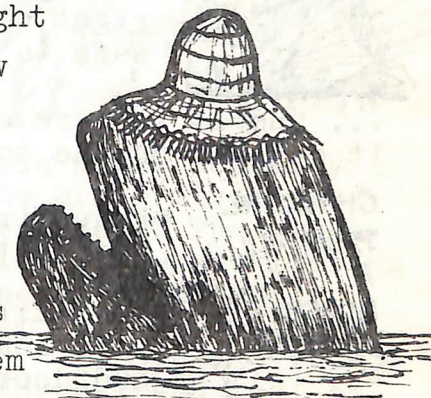
### Artists

A. Dunstan.  
K. Dyer.

## Famous Animals.1.

### MOBY - THE SUNBURNT WHALE.

Marineland in Florida, U.S.A. has a performing pilot whale called Moby. Between shows Moby likes to rest his " chin " on the edge of his tank and watch people. One day in 1962 Moby leaned over the edge a bit too far and fell out of his tank ! It took 20 men to lift half-ton Moby back into his pool by putting two big slings around him. The doctors reported that Moby was all right except for a few scratches and a mild case of sunburn !



Moby wears a sun hat now!

Q. Why do whales and dolphins seem to like coming to the surface so often ?

Q. Have you heard of any other stories of stranded whales ? What happened to them ?





## The Man from C.F.A.

Victoria's Country Fire Authority have been answering up to 35 fire calls a day this summer. So far this has not been as busy as 1967/68 when we had 11 total fire ban days in a row! But the danger time for fires goes right up to the 30th of April- so whether or

not we have a safe 1975 depends on us. When we asked the man from C.F.A. what we could do to help, these are some of the things he said :

The bottom of a bottle can focus the sun's rays like a magnifying glass—and start a fire!

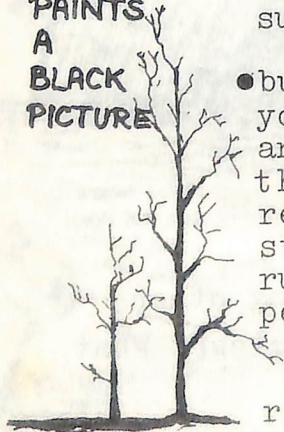


- Children are outside more than most people so they are the ones who should notice long grass, piles of rubbish and broken glass—especially close to buildings. Clean it up!

- Nearly everything will burn under the right conditions- so never think that it's safe to be careless with matches and fire.

... and if you are caught in a fire what do you do ? It depends on the sort of fire :

**CHARCOAL  
PAINTS  
A  
BLACK  
PICTURE**



- housefire- get out before the smoke suffocates you.

- bushfire- if there is no escape, stay in your house or car with all the windows and doors shut tightly. Keep low ( where the best air is ) and have wet blankets ready if you can. (One of the C.F.A. men stayed alive in his car even though the rubber around the windscreen melted.) The petrol tank is not likely to explode.

- if you are outside, keep low and roll yourself into a ball- staying in a



ditch or behind a solid object. Metal water tanks are not safe hiding places in a fire- they heat up too quickly.

BUT BETTER STILL - NO BUSHFIRES

FOR VICTORIA.

P.S. See how many other C.F.A. anti-fire slogans you can make up. Send them to us marked "Wally's Slogans."

## Flying Firebugs...

When in Queensland a few years ago fires were a very common sight. Always above the fire could be seen dozens of fork-tailed kites and hawks. They were feasting on the insects rising in the thermal currents created by the fire. Often they would swoop on mice fleeing from the flames.



Aboriginals in the Northern Territory have reported seeing these kites actually

spreading the grass fires in order to get a meal. They have been seen picking up smouldering sticks in their talons and dropping them in fresh patches of dry grass. Then they climbed and waited for a fresh meal of grasshoppers, mice and snakes.



A black-shouldered Kite joins in.

Pretty smart, don't you think, and yet "bird-brained" is a form of derision !





# ? 'QUERIES' ?

( Dear Ass. Ed. )

Do you have a nature question  
query  
problem

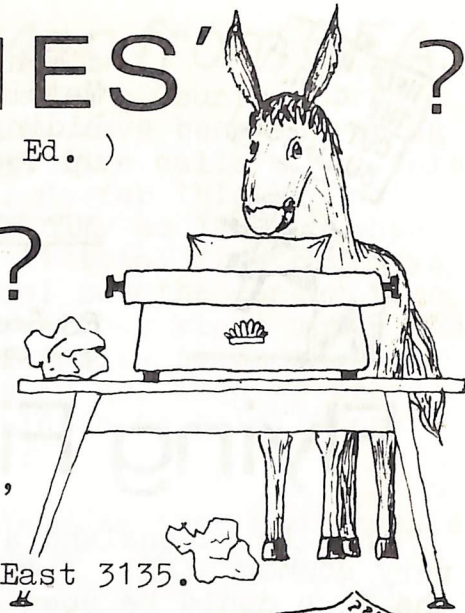
If you have please write to :


Ass. Ed.,

"Nature Notes",

Box 28,

Ringwood East 3135.



She will attempt to answer your ?'s in the column each month. If the questions get too curly  she may have to call on Wally for help.

This month grade 6 at Ringwood East wondered if Black Widow Spiders were found in Australia ???????

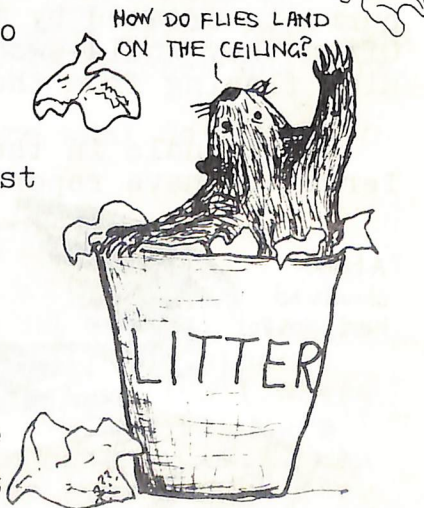
Ass. Ed. replies:

The deadly Black Widow Spider is found in America, but of the same family and almost identical to it is the Australian Red Back Spider.

Interestingly the common Black House Spider is sometimes known as the Black Window Spider because of its habit of building in the corner of windows.

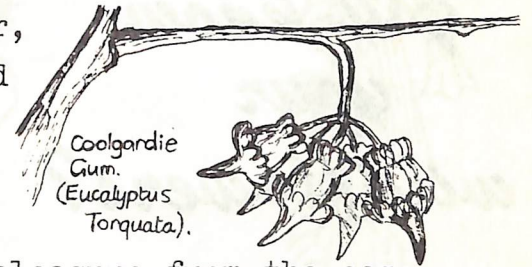
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Ringwood East P.S.

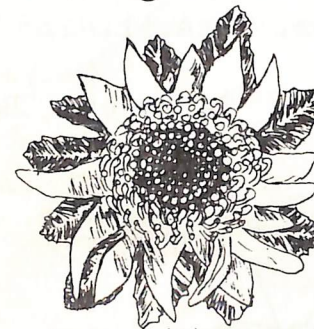


# Let's Look at Wildflowers.

Everyone enjoys looking at wildflowers. Some people admire their mass of colour, some admire their shape and some admire the beauty of form of the flower. If we are able to give a plant a name we can get greater pleasure from the same wildflower when we meet it next time. It is like meeting an old friend. Sometimes we can learn about



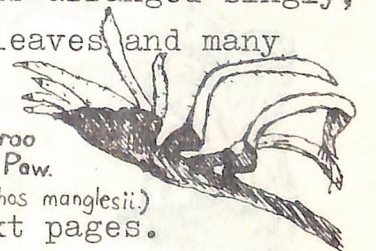
our wildflowers because a great many are now being grown in gardens. If there is no one to tell us the names we need to look at illustrations in books.



Waratah. (*Telopea speciosissima*).

We can often recognise plants by their general appearance. This is sufficient until we become aware that we can look further than this. We can note the colour of the flower but this, very often, is not a great help to identification. We need to look at the shape and form of the flower, whether the flower is arranged singly, in groups, with leaves or without leaves and many other points which we can note as we become more observant.

To see how well you know our wildflowers try the test on the next pages.



"Nature Notes". March '75.

Page 7.



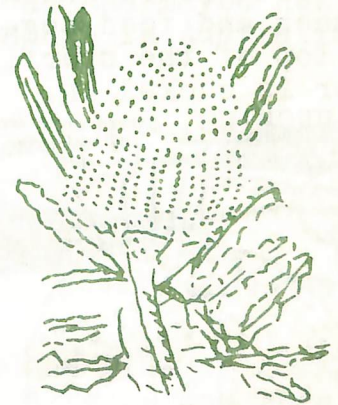
How well do  
you know  
your  
wildflowers?



Here are the names.....so see if you can match them.

Kangaroo Grass. Grevillea. Everlasting. Pea Flower. Eucalypt. Heath.

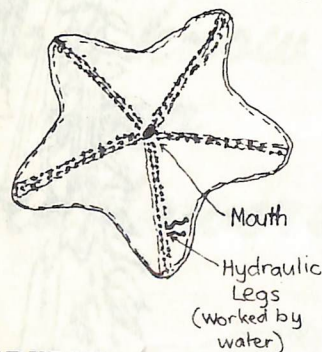
Tea-tree. Banksia. Correa.



If you look in magazines you may be able to collect pictures of some wildflowers.  
Sort them into groups and paste them in a scrap-book.



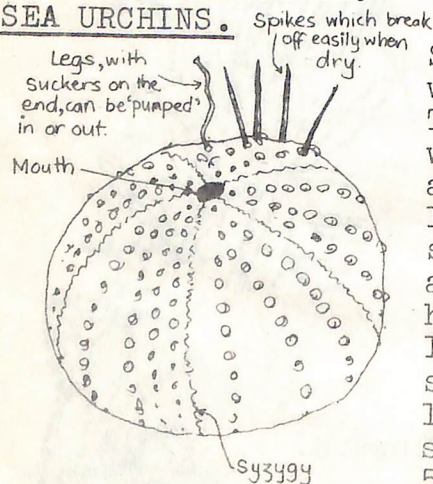
# The Mighty Ocean



## STARFISH.

No starfish has less than 5 "arms" though some have more. They move about by using lots of little hollow legs which are moved by pumping water through them. Starfish are very clever at opening mussels and cockles and when they have, they squirt digestive juices inside to help them eat the food. Then the starfish's stomach comes out of its mouth and takes in the food- after which the starfish swallows its stomach and food together! (What terrible manners). On the top of the starfish is a filter through which salt water is sucked in.

## SEA URCHINS.

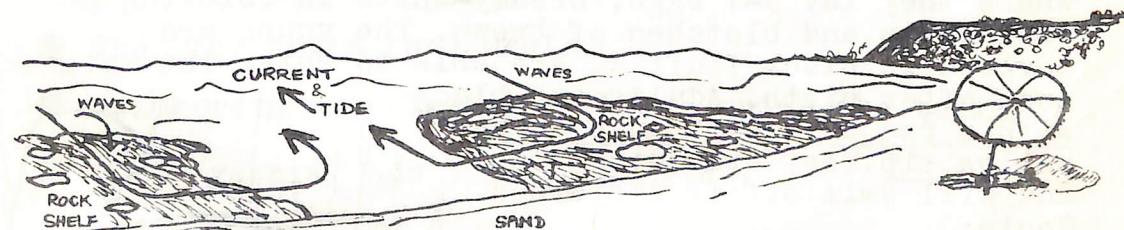
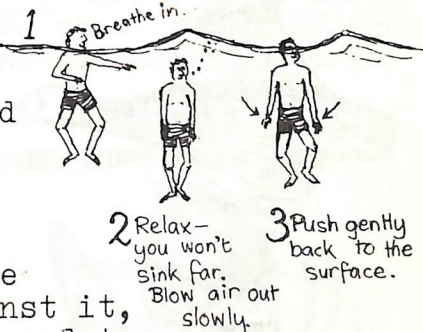


Some people used to think these were eggs but this is not so. They are rather like a starfish with the points all sewn together, as they have the same sort of legs to get around with and a similar crusty shell (which is also their skeleton). Urchins, however, don't eat shellfood like starfish. They suck in sand and clean off the tiny algae living on it for their food. A sea-urchin is actually made of 5 "plates" joined together. (A join in the plates is called a

Ringwood East P.S.

syzygy- try that word in "Hang the Butcher"! The spines on the outside discourage fish from eating them.

Have you ever felt how strong the sea can be? People who spend a lot of time on or in the water have learnt never to fight the ocean- because it always wins. When they get caught in a rip or a strong current they don't waste their energy trying to swim against it, but they keep afloat and relaxed and try to either swim across the current, or to even let the current take them to land. There are stories of people who have stayed afloat (in the way shown in the pictures above) for days in the ocean way out of their depth, because they didn't panic and waste their energy. How about next time you're at the pool or the beach, you practice staying afloat and maybe next summer there will be fewer drownings in Australia.



A good place NOT to swim when the tide is going out! The waves come crashing in on the rocks and then all the water drains out through the channel between them. The current becomes so strong that even good swimmers could drown if they tried to fight it. So next time you find a nice little "pocket beach" (especially at a 'back-beach' like Blairgowrie or Sorrento) check on the tides and currents before swimming.

"Nature Notes". March '75.

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## SOME READERS' LETTERS

\* The first two prize winning letters for 1975! Well done boys - keep them coming!

### BLACKBURN LAKE WATER BIRDS

#### Herons:

At Blackburn Lake two types of herons are found. The White Faced Heron is more rarely seen and is more dependant on the Lake, not usually going out of the reserve. It is a grey bird with a white face. On the other hand the Nankeen Heron often goes to places quite a distance from the Lake. A brown bird with a black cap and two long white head feathers.

#### Ducks:

The Black Duck is the commonest water bird at the Lake.

It usually eats yabbies and goes round in flocks of two to six. They are a greyish brown with a green band on the wing.

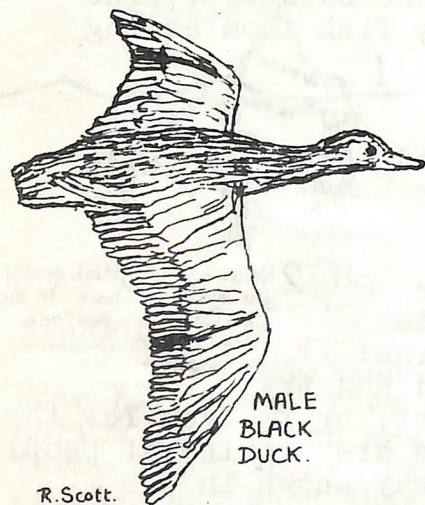
#### Moorhens:

Moorhens usually make their nests in reeds where they lay 5-7 eggs, creamy-white in coloring with spots and blotches of brown. The young are covered in black fluff & are able to enter the water soon after birth. Adults are black with a red bill with an orange-yellow tip. They are quite shy and will swim off if disturbed.

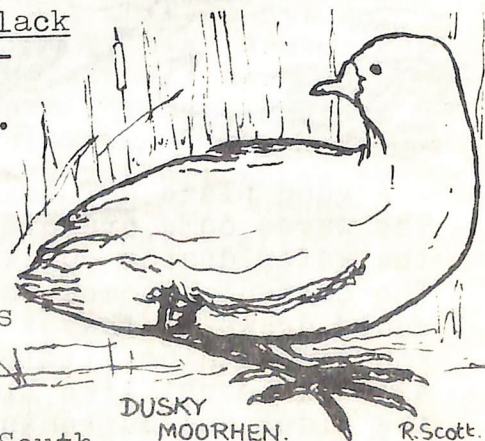
#### Coots:

Except that they have a white bill Coots resemble Moorhens, Their nest is made of twigs and dead reeds. They eat yabbies mainly and at times other water going creatures.

This letter (and drawings) is from Robert Scott, Nunawading South.



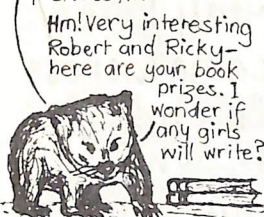
R.Scott.



DUSKY MOORHEN.

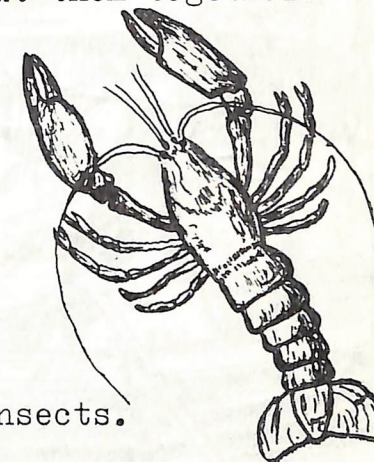
R.Scott.

I'm going to color these pictures in!



\* Another letter to win a book prize this month comes from Ricky Johnson of Parkmore Primary School. He accepted a challenge issued in Nature Notes last October to find out some more about YABBIES. Here is the list of things he knows about them. If you know anything else please write and tell us.

- \* Yabbies will kill fish if you put them together.
- \* Their eyes do not sit in their heads- they poke out.
- \* Yabbies have 6 nippers and four legs.
- \* Their real name is Crustacean.
- \* They have gills a bit like a fish.
- \* They eat roots as well as mud insects.
- \* Yabbie is a native name.
- \* The body has a hard shell.
- \* Swimmerets are claw type things under the tail.
- \* Every yabbie has 3 pairs of jaws.



#### ANSWERS TO PUZZLE.

- |          |             |
|----------|-------------|
| 1. Swan  | 6. Bear     |
| 2. Cat   | 7. Hen      |
| 3. Camel | 8. Emu      |
| 4. Bison | 9. Ass      |
| 5. Drake | 10. Donkeys |

#### Who Am I ? A Slater.

- |          |
|----------|
| 11. Pony |
| 12. Dog  |
| 13. Worm |
| 14. Ant  |
| 15. Crow |



# WONDEROO

CRIME BUSTER OF THE  
UNDERGROWTH

TEXT - H.J. LAWRY

ARTIST - A. DUNSTAN

One cool evening  
while holidaying on  
the Murray River  
Wonderoo came across  
his old friend  
Colin Cod, who  
was looking very  
gloomy indeed....

Hello Colin, what's  
the problem?

It's my river you  
see, it's becoming  
muddier every day!

We Murray Cod have  
lived here for centuries  
but now we will have to  
move out to another  
river because there's no  
food here for us now...  
I just can't understand  
it Wonderoo!

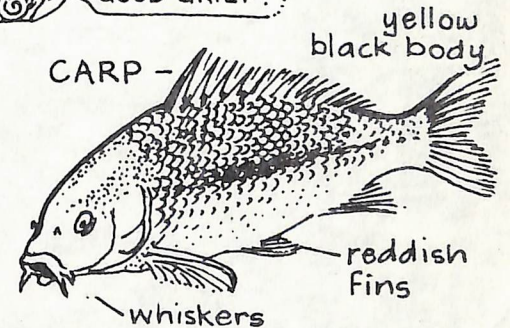
With his aqualung strapped to his  
back Wonderoo dived in to have a  
closer look...

The water down deep  
was indeed murky but by  
shining a bright light Wonderoo  
soon saw the cause of the problem  
European Carp, THOUSANDS of them !!!

GOOD GRIEF!

These carp live on  
creatures and plants  
that live in the mud  
and their continual  
stirring makes the  
water UNINHABITABLE

for all other fish. So for this reason REDFIN,  
PERCH and COD are all leaving the river.



How can we rid the Murray of  
these pests Girls and Boys?  
Please give me some ideas!  
To be continued.....



# PUZZLES

by James....with a little help from his friends..

Grade 2A at Ringwood East P.S. have hidden animals and birds in these sentences. Can you find them ?

1. The girls wanted to knit. (swan)
2. We had a picnic at the beach.
3. Jill came last in the race.
4. Bob is on the swing.
5. Dad raked the lawn.
6. Rob has earned his pocket money.
7. The nest has eggs in it.
8. I have a white mug.
9. Anne has seven old coins.
10. You should not stand on the keys.
11. Stand up on your toes.
12. Do good deeds every day.
13. You can draw or make a model.
14. Santa comes at Christmas.
15. John has a plastic rowing boat.

Hi! The answers are on page 13 -if Wally hasn't pinched them.

WHO AM I? I spend a lot of time under damp logs and rocks. I breathe through gills. I have two pairs of feelers. Like the Yabbie on page 13 I am a crustacean. I have no neck. See yous...later!

