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nature notes

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A. Dunstan	
W. Prohasky	
-*-*-*	

editorial...

How do you sort out all the living things there are around ? Are plants living things ? Why ? Perhaps you've played that 'twenty questions' game called "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral", well that's not a bad way to put everything into groups. But are rocks and minerals living things ? We're going to start by dividing all living things into the

PLANT KINGDOM and the ANIMAL KINGDOM.

Of course there are many groups and families in each of these kingdoms, and we hope that the articles in Nature Notes this year will help you tell the difference between them. Perhaps for a start you could work out which kingdom these living things belong in :

coral, fungus, germs, seaweed, birds, sponges.

Did you notice the mistakes in our last issue ? There weren't too many but it must be that jolly wombat playing with the typewriter. Please see if you can find any mistakes in this copy.

Yours sincerely,

K.Dyer

P.S. The cover photo didn't quite come out as we hoped - it is NOT a sea anemone but one of the beautiful flowering gums that are out at the moment.

Ringwood East P.S.

My folt indeed!
Wols Wombat
never makes
misstakes.



Famous Animals, 2.

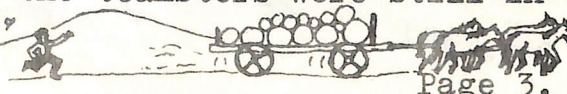


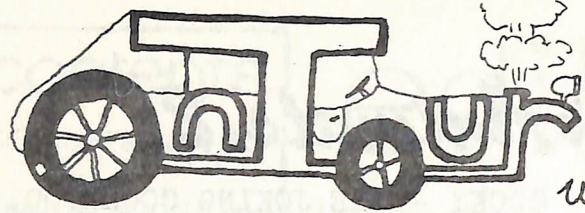
COCKY - THE JOKING COCKATOO.

Perhaps the most famous of the many white cockatoos called Cocky was the one kept in a pub on the Adelaide River earlier this century.

Cocky picked up all the slang he heard in the bar, but his best imitation was that of two dogs fighting. Many times customers would come rushing into the hotel to throw out the fighting dogs, only to find Cocky strutting up and down on his perch enjoying himself immensely.

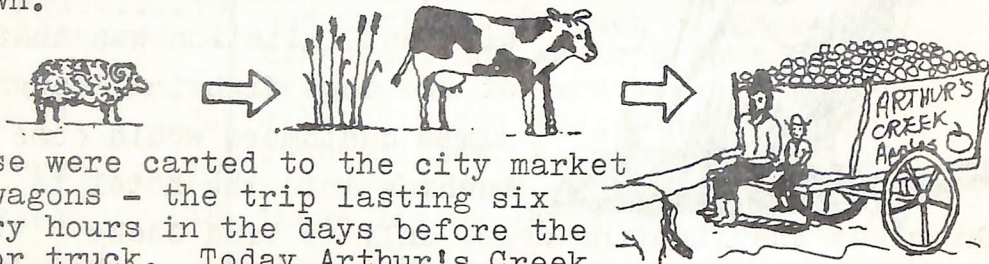
Cocky's worst trick was played on the teamsters who came to the pub. These men used teams of pack-horses to pull large wagons overland. They trained these horses extremely well, so that they would obey the teamsters' spoken commands. When asked to stop, the horses would stand waiting patiently for their masters' word to begin. Of course Cocky soon learnt these words and took great delight in sending off the horse teams at full pace whilst the teamsters were still in the bar relaxing !





ARTHUR'S with Nature Notes...

Just a tiny speck on the map (well some maps anyway)-that's Arthur's Creek, a farming district about 26 miles by road north-east from the G.P.O. in Melbourne (and even less as the crow flies). This delightful area was first settled in 1844 by Patrick Reid and received its present name in 1862 after a Mr. Arthur, a surveyor who died and lies buried on Willowgrove Farm- just above the present bridge. The first settlers, the squatters, brought flocks of sheep which gave way to the selectors with their mixed farms. These in turn gave way to orchardists with apples and peaches being the main fruit grown.



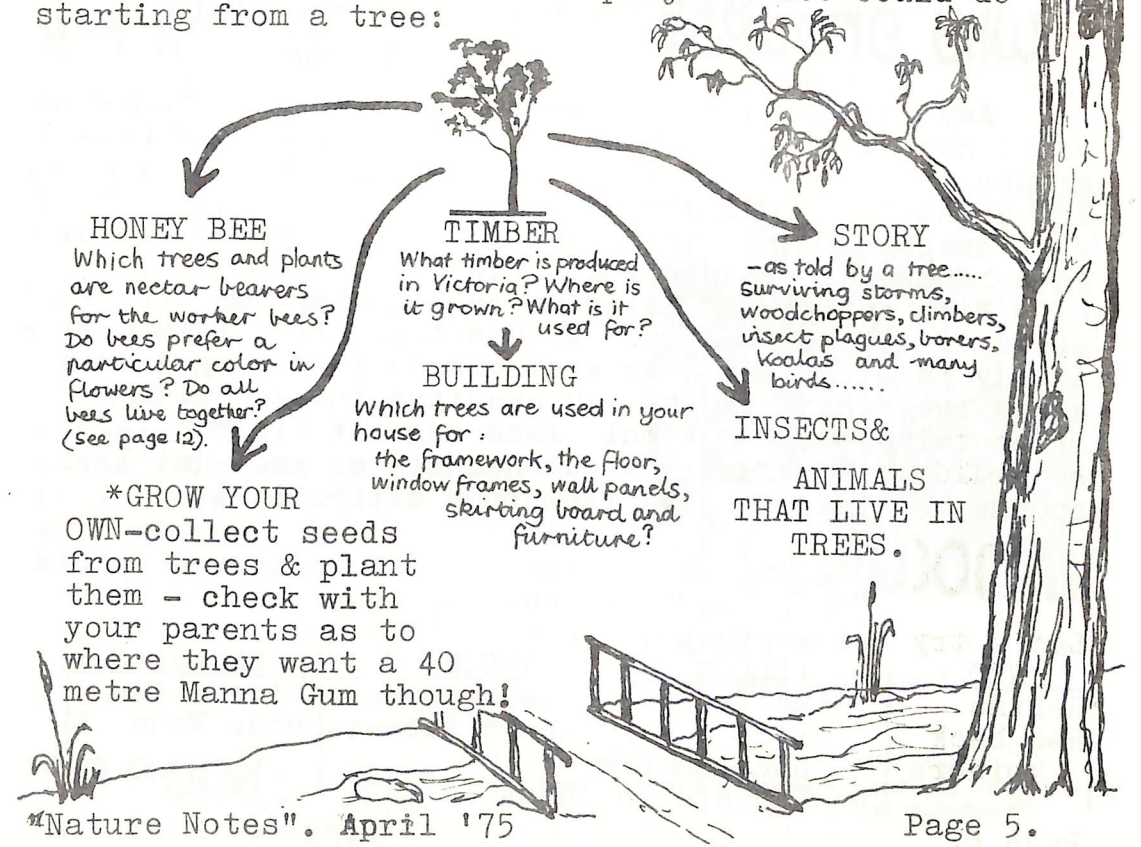
These were carted to the city market in wagons - the trip lasting six weary hours in the days before the motor truck. Today Arthur's Creek is a thriving rural community, with the main industry reverting to mixed farming - although some orchards and a cool store still remain in the area.

Apart from the creek itself (at present a series of still pools) the main landmarks are the beautiful Sugarloaf Mountain (nearly 600m high) and the Yan Yean Reservoir. This reservoir was Melbourne's first permanent water supply, with a capacity of 30,000 megalitres of water. Perhaps you could make a study of Melbourne's other water storages. The M.M.B.W. may help you if you write to them.

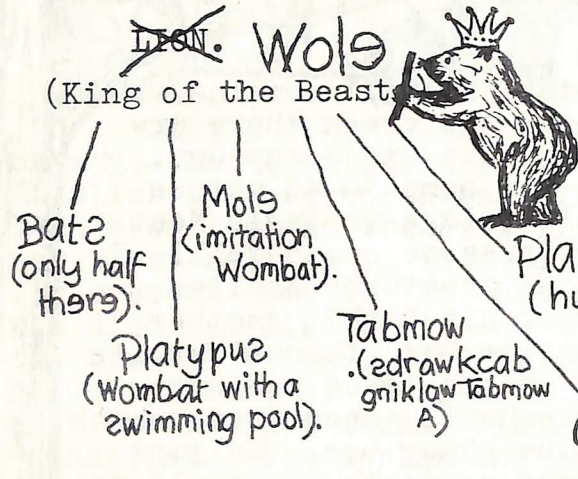


CREEK PART ONE.

Though much of the area has now been cleared for farming, some of the original vegetation still remains. On the steep hillsides along the creek there are many fine specimens of Manna Gum and Swamp Gum. One magnificent old Manna Gum some 30-40 metres high stands near the little bridge in Eagle Nest Road. What a wealth of stories he could tell! I wonder how many thousands of creatures shelter among his branches and under his bark? Another common tree here is the Yellow Box, famous for its honey producing qualities and as fence posts. Messmate too is another frequently seen tree, which also produces pollen for the honey bee. So just look at all the research and projects YOU could do starting from a tree:



The Animal Kingdom.



Please excuse the scribble on this page, I'm afraid Wally doesn't agree with me on how to put animals into groups.

Actually, most zoologists divide the Animal Kingdom into 17 big groups (or Phyla), and each of these big groups into many more classes and families.

Why groups?

Anyone who collects stamps, swapcards or nick-nacks would know that it is best to sort a collection into groups so that you know how many of each kind you have. You might sort your stamps into different countries, your swapcards into different colors and your nick-nacks into backwards alphabetical order.

With animals it helps us to remember the different kinds if we put them into groups too. It's like having a tidy room (if you know what that's like) - you know where everything is and you can find things quickly. If we talked about animals in one great big bundle, we could easily forget about numbats or gnus until it became too late to save them from extinction!

how

do we sort animals into families or species or groups? By colors, countries or shape?

Let's try color groups:

RED	YELLOW	GREEN	BLUE
Robins	Giraffes	Grasshoppers	Bluebottle
Red back	Yellow	Superb Parrot	Blue Wren
Spiders	Honeyeaters		

Can YOU add to these lists?

Of course lots of animals are mixtures of more than one color - particularly of brown, black and white. Add those colors to your columns and see if you can sort these animals into color groups:

Praying Mantis, Flamingo, Polar Bear, Dingo, Death Adder, Seagull, Stingray, Flathead, Gnu.

(Q: Why would you put a sunburnt Zebra, an embarrassed Magpie and a newspaper in the same group?

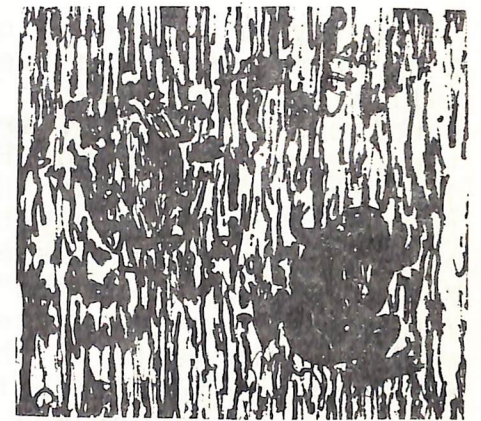
Ans: Because they're black, white and red all over.)

Why colors?

Have you ever wondered why animals are colored? I can think of two good reasons (you might be able to find more):

1 - ATTRACTION. Many animals (such as the Lyrebird and Robin) use color and display to attract a mate so that they can breed. It is usually the male that does the "showing-off", although some females like to get all "dressed up" too. Find out all you can about the different colors, calls and dances of animals in the mating season - particularly of birds like the Brolga and the Lyrebird. The other reason for color is almost the opposite:

2 - CAMOUFLAGE. Bright red lions would not last long (except in a zoo) because they would not be able to creep up on their lunch. They would soon die from starvation. White moths have died out in some big cities. Why? Because the moths were easily seen when they landed on walls black with smoke from the factories, and were gobbled up! So we can see that camouflage can be important for hunters and for hidiers. Make a list of animals that use camouflage and draw sketches of them.



Which of these two frogs will be eaten first? Why?

no good?

Is it any use sorting animals into color groups? Which group would you put a Chameleon Lizard into - they change colors! Surely birds should all be in a group together?

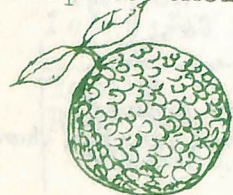
NEXT MONTH WE'LL TRY GROUPING ANIMALS BY HOW THEY MOVE. "Nature Notes". April '75.

FOREIGN ORANGE.

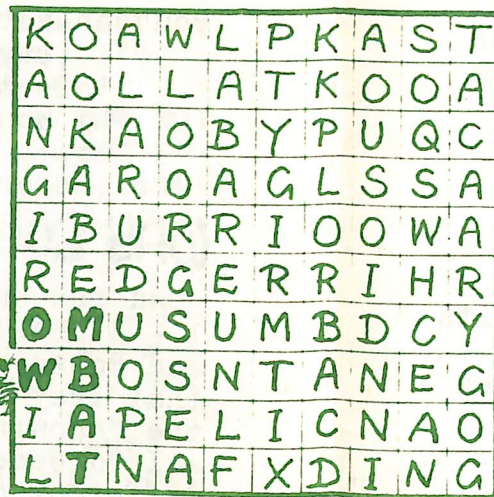
A few years ago Nature Notes received a parcel with a strange fruit inside. It was round, green, deeply dimpled and about 10-12cm across. The fruit was known as having come from Tumut in the Alpine Country of N.S.W.. It caused no end of problems in identification. Finally it was tracked down as an Osage Orange—an import from North America.

The tree belongs to the mulberry family and its hard, strong, flexible wood was used by the Osage Indians for bows and war clubs. Today it is used for railway sleepers and fence posts and also yields a yellow dye.

Last year Nature Notes discovered a group of deciduous trees about 8m tall with a few strange fruit specimens still remaining. These trees grow in Reynolds Rd., Doncaster just west of Blackburn Rd. It is thought that these may be specimens of the Osage Orange as again this year they bear "oranges", about 7cm across and quite green. We will have to wait for them to ripen for positive identification, but perhaps some reader may be able to help us there. Can you?



AN L S CAS
IMA TAIR E



Color the names
in different colors.



Even Wally can find himself, so you should be able to find another 18 Australian birds and animals in this wordstew!

This'n' That

THE FIGHT.

I was walking to my car to go to the tank at lunchtime today when I noticed a furious wrestling match taking place on the ground. I didn't like to stop it because it was much more interesting than the Frazier/Ellis fight. In one corner was Barney Blowfly and in the other the terrible Willy Wasp. The spectators included several of those little black ants that you see everywhere, and myself. Barney was making all the noise and started to use unfair tactics by raising the dust, but Willy just hung on and stung on. Eventually Barney

Barney gives a right uppercut to the jaw but Willy replies with a stinging blow below the belt.



was paralysed by Willy's poison and was held flat on his back for the count. Of course the spectators (the tiny ants) rushed into the ring (treading all over poor Barney) to congratulate the champ Willy.

Unfortunately Willy didn't appreciate being walked all over by things too small to sting, and he flew off in a rage. I was left wondering whether the ants were members of the "Anty Fighting Campaign."

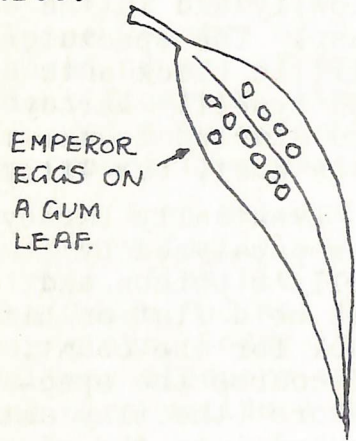
What would Willy have done to his victim? At home Willy had built a house with a room and "deep freeze" for each of his future children.....Barney was going to have been kept beautifully fresh, and then asked to tea when one of the children grew up!

P.S. The habits of some wasps are quite like those of the leafcutting bee (see page 12). Why not look up and find out all you can about the mason wasp, the paper wasp and the gall wasp. What sort of homes do they make?

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

THE GUM EMPEROR MOTH.

Note that the word "gum" is placed first because this moth belongs to the "Emperor" moths which occur throughout the world and this is the Emperor Moth which feeds upon the "gum" tree.



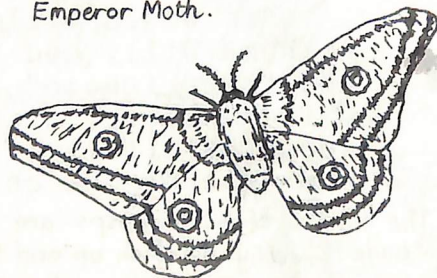
EMPEROR EGGS ON A GUM LEAF.

The caterpillar(larva) of this moth is probably well known to most boys and girls. When the caterpillar first hatches from its egg it is nearly black. As it feeds and grows larger it becomes green. Each segment of its body is adorned with beautiful blue and orange to red tuft-like projections.

If we wish to keep the caterpillars for observation we need to know what the feed tree is. We sometimes find the caterpillar on certain gum trees, peppercorn trees or liquid amber. Can you find them on any others? We need to give the caterpillar a fresh leaf or leaves every day. Don't let it die of starvation. Just before it is ready to spin its cocoon the caterpillar will lose its brightness.

Try to watch the caterpillar spinning its cocoon and note how clever it is at moving the thread to the right position. We now have to wait for the caterpillar to change into a moth. It is unusual for us to see the moth emerge as the usual time for this happening is late afternoon.

Female gum Emperor Moth.

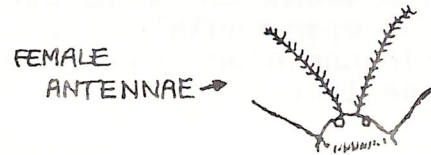


(on plants) IN APRIL.

The reason for this is probably because the moth is nocturnal and this will minimize the time when the moth may be seen in daylight and eaten.



MALE ANTENNAE



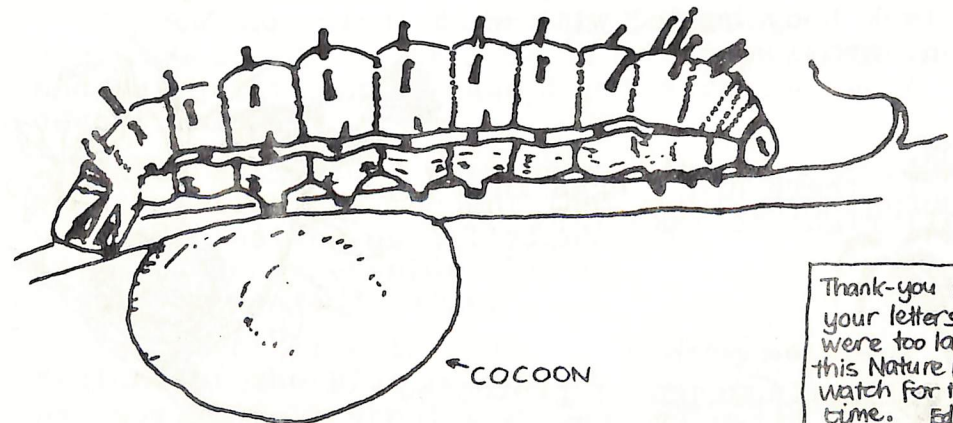
FEMALE ANTENNAE

When the moth first emerges its wings are limp and creased and folded. It needs room to spread them so that they can gradually inflate and harden.

The males have beautiful antennae or feelers while the female's are quite narrow. The female moth is also much larger in the body.

The female likes to lay her eggs on the feed tree. The eggs are yellowish-white and are laid in rows on the upper surface of the leaf.

In the mountainous country we may find a relative. The common Gum Emperor is bluish green with a pale lateral stripe. The mountainous species is green with a broad pink lateral stripe.



COCOON

Thank-you for your letters! Most were too late for this Nature Notes-so watch for them next time. Ed.

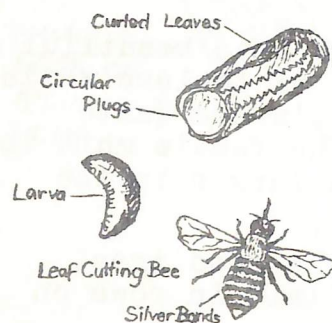
? 'QUERIES' ?



(Dear Ass. Ed.)

How do you draw a circle ? With a compass, free hand or using a circular object ? It isn't easy for us, but this month the Ass. Ed. discovered a native Australian bee which can cut perfect leaf circles without any help at all.

Joanne Treweek from Ringwood East brought to the N.N's. office some cylinder shaped rose leaf cases.



(All drawings actual size.)

The cases were about 2cm long and the one we cut open contained a white grub. Joanne also brought in grey-black bee like insect with the cases. Inside the case the bee also deposits a food supply of pollen or nectar for the grub to live on when it hatches. The bee then cuts 4 or 5 perfect leaf circles to seal the case.

This native bee has tufts of brown hair on the face and a black body banded with white hairs on the abdominal section.

QUESTION.

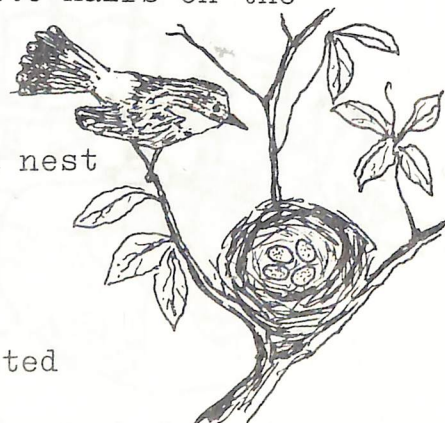
If there are 4 eggs in a nest is it all right to take 1 ?

ANSWER.

NO.

WHY.

1) Collecting eggs of protected birds is prohibited by law.



2) When it is necessary to collect eggs for scientific purposes the whole clutch must be taken.

3) The birds cannot spare the egg as they lay only enough for the continuation of the species.

4) If the nest is touched or an egg taken, the parent birds may desert the nest—even birds can count it seems.

5) If you visit a nest the chances are that before long some bush creature will follow your trail. If he likes an egg diet he won't take 1 egg out of 4, but will eat the lot.

DON'T BE AN
EGGHEAD.
LEAVE BIRD
NESTING TO
THE BIRDS!



Look for "The Animals Noah Forgot " by 'Banjo' Patterson in your school or local library. The poem " High Explosive " tells just such a tale - with a ' sting ' at the end !

Interested in observing and studying native birds? Why not join the Bird Observers Club. Write to :

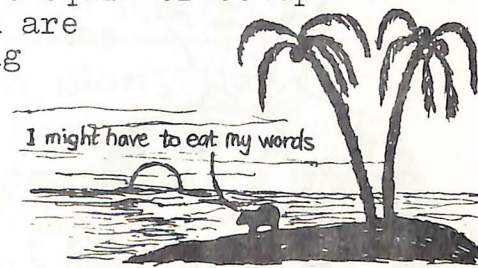
The Secretary,
Bird Observers Club,
P.O.Box 2167T,
G.P.O. Melbourne 3001.



Gillian Smith of Forest Hill writes :
" Please could you tell me if it is possible to cook and eat jellyfish in case I get stranded on a desert island?"

Wally said "Yuk" when he was 'helping' to answer this question. He thought that squid or octopus would be better eating as jellyfish are often poisonous besides having little or no food value.

You might like to read "Island of the Blue Dolphins" by Scott O'Dell about a girl left behind on an island.



WONDEROO versus EUROPEAN CARP!

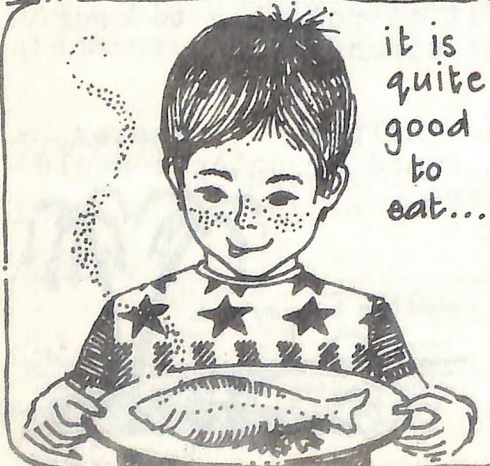
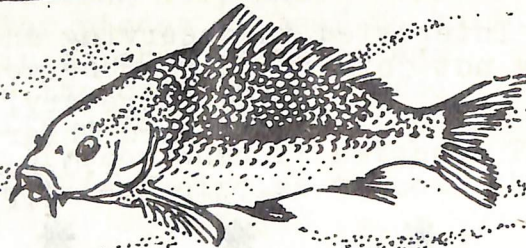
TEXT. H.J. LAWRY
ARTIST. A DUNSTAN



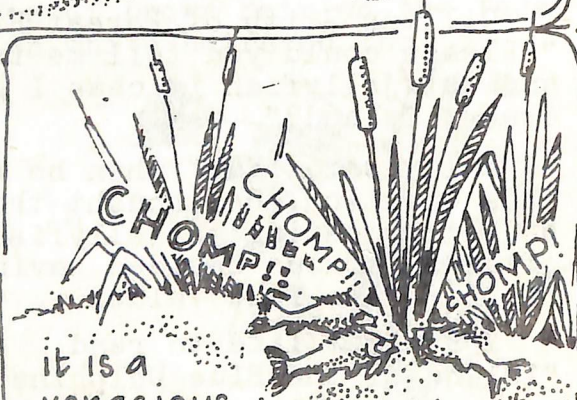
Last month we left poor Wonderoo puzzling over what could be done about our European Carp infested Murray River. Have you thought about it any further?

your letters!

Introduced from Europe and Asia this fish has some good points - which are...



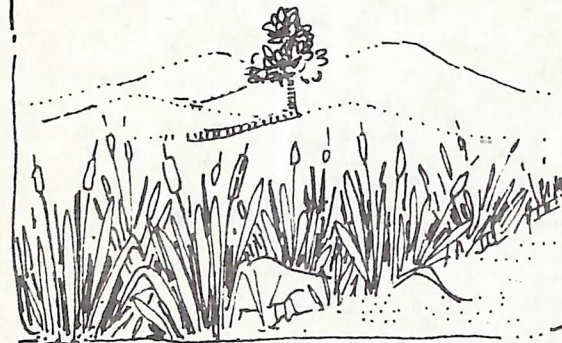
it is quite good to eat...



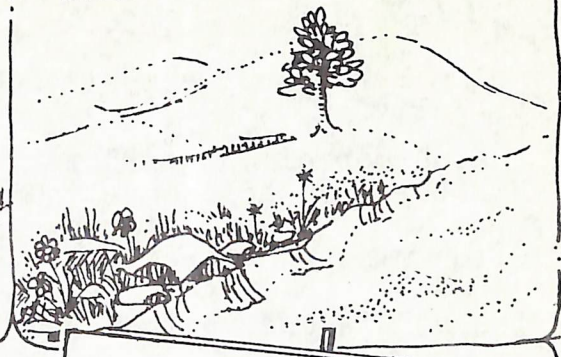
it is a voracious eater of vegetable matter

Ringwood East P.S.

before...



after...



Waterways infested with Kabungi or water hyacinth can soon be cleared by the voracious carp... the trouble is...

HOW DO YOU GET RID OF THE CARP?



They are very fast breeders and grow to a terrific size, some weigh as much as 30 lbs! One large fish caught at Echuca recently contained 4 lbs of Roe! *

CAN YOU THINK OF SOME WAY OF REDUCING THEIR NUMBERS AND KEEPING THEM REDUCED??



Wonderoo has a plan, but he would like to hear some more of your ideas too!

* fish eggs

mystery Message

* Not a bear - but almost as cuddly as Wally.

* What a marvellous bird is the
His beak can hold more than his
tummy can!

* Often mistaken for a frog.

* The sun is one, but the earth isn't.

* The cover of Nature Notes Vol.12, No.1.
showed a picture of a bush-

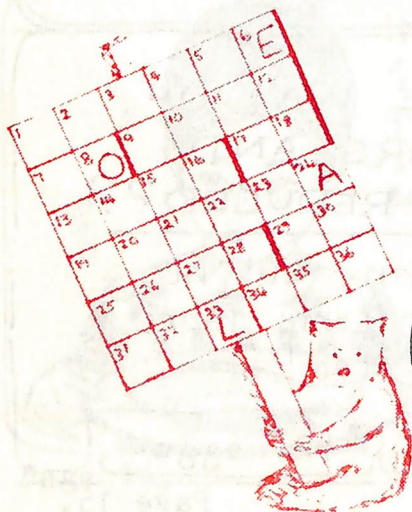
* Always make sure your aquarium is kept

* The easiest thing to grow in a garden is a

* A huntsman spider can catch sleepy flies
quite

LY.

The numbers under each letter above tell you which square on Wally's sign to put the letter in. If you do it correctly you will be able to read his message. We haven't made any mistakes like in the last Puzzle Page - sorry about that!



ASK A SILLY QUESTION.....

1. Why do ducks have webbed feet?
(To help stamp out bushfires.)
2. Why do elephants have flat feet?
(To help stamp out burning ducks.)
3. What did James Snail say at breakfast? (Lettuce start.)
4. What is round, yellow and dangerous? (A shark infested custard tart.)

Now try number 5. What is cheeky, fat,
has claws and is red all over?
(An embarrassed Wally.)

