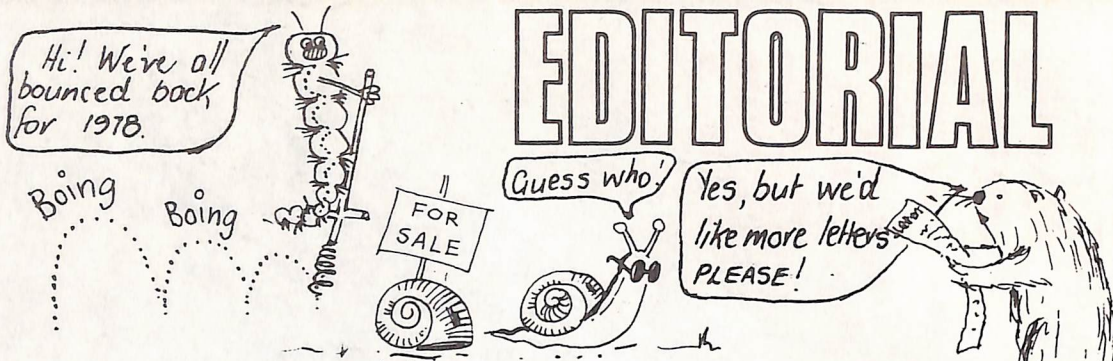


# NATURE NOTES



Vol. 15. No: 1.



Welcome to the pages of Nature Notes for 1978. This year sees some new changes at Nature Notes. Firstly, the new Assistant Editor responsible for continuing Probe is Miss Lorraine Orme. She comes to her job with new ideas and I'm sure all our readers will wish her well.

To make our job a little easier and in an effort to continually improve the quality of our publications, we have purchased new processing equipment. This will enable us to print more photographs, samples of any schoolwork that you may send to us and lighten the load on our artists by being able to reduce and enlargen artwork. So watch out for even better magazines this year.

More letters please... we need letters to print. How long have you been receiving Nature Notes or Probe? During that time have you written to us? If not, why not? Although it is not always possible to print all letters received, your name will be printed in Nature Notes. Write to us on any subject - about articles we print, projects you may be working on at school, camps, visits to National Parks.... Book prizes are awarded for letters printed in Nature Notes and Probe. Why not write SOON?

If you have not re-ordered for 1978, your last chance is in this issue. Fill in the order form on page 15 and return it now.

Your Nature Notes Committee for 1978 is:

Mr. K. Speer. (D.I) , Mr. F.Little (Principal, Ringwood East), Mr. D.Dobson (Croydon Sth.), Miss L. Orme (Probe), Mrs. L.Sanderson (Manchester ), Mr. C.Bull (Heathmont), Mr. L.Delacca (Principal, Greenhills),

*B. L. Archibald.*  
Editor.



We want Wally's news



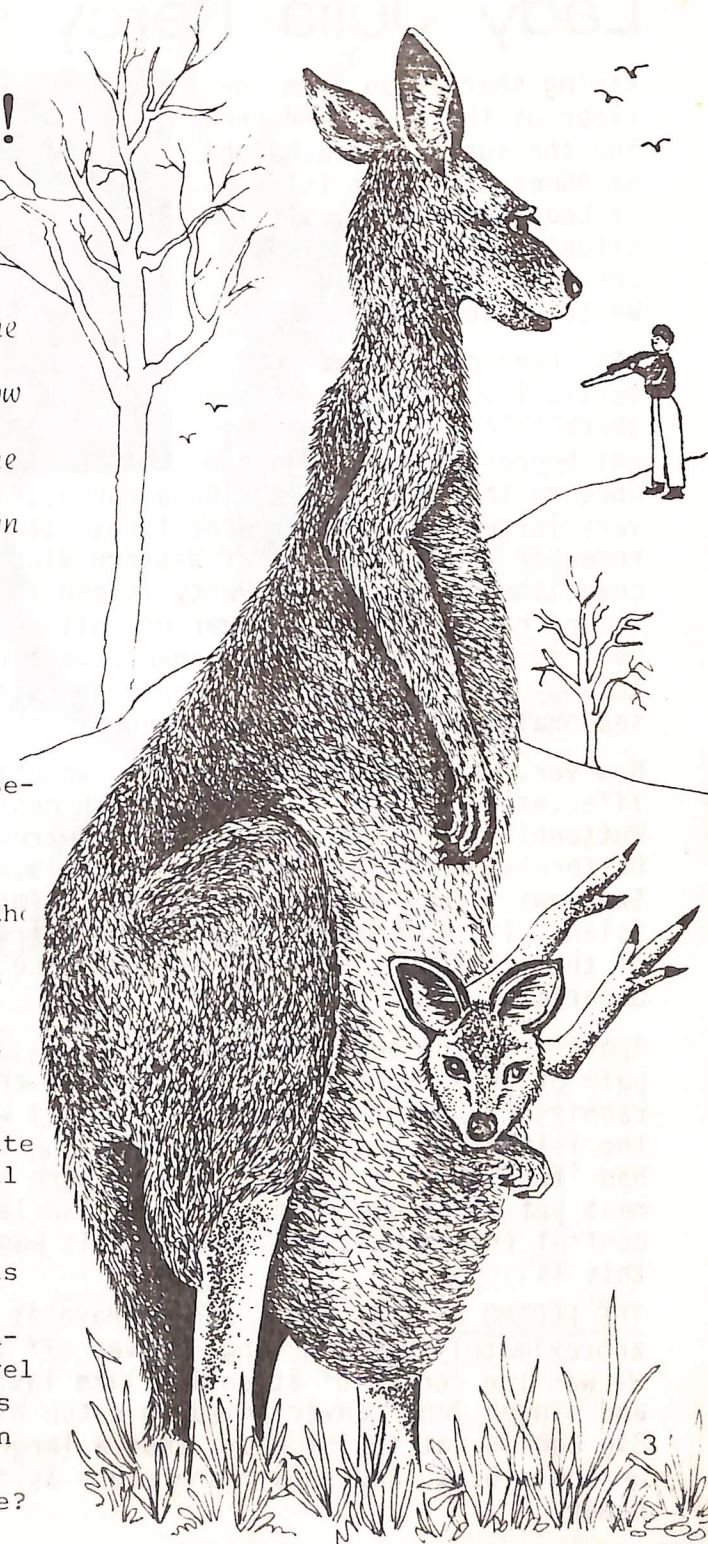
## If It Moves..... .....Shoot It!

"And if it flies I'll shoot it  
If it runs on the ground  
If it lives in a cave  
And makes a weird sound  
I will kill all the bears and the  
lions and the moose  
With my telescopic sight you know  
I'm feeling real loose  
I will kill all the ducks and the  
geese and the quail  
Just for a weekend of fun, out on  
the wilderness trail."

-Country Joe McDonald.

Shaken somewhat by the news of two slaughtered Grey Kangaroo, Graham Pizzey of the Melbourne Herald used the words of this song to help illustrate the senselessness of 'killing off' wildlife, particularly the Grey Kangaroo which he says only survives in a few 'pockets' on the Mornington Peninsular.

As you are all probably aware as a result of growing public awareness of the need to protect our unique wildlife, State and Federal governments have passed legislation to curb indiscriminate killings. Why is it that not all of the community adopts a responsible attitude toward the environment? Once protective acts are passed, are they easily policed? Are such acts of parliament effective? Why does man revel in killing native fauna? Discuss the issues raised by this item in class or even with your friends. Ask yourself: Do they have to die?



# Lady Julia Percy Island. C.Bull.

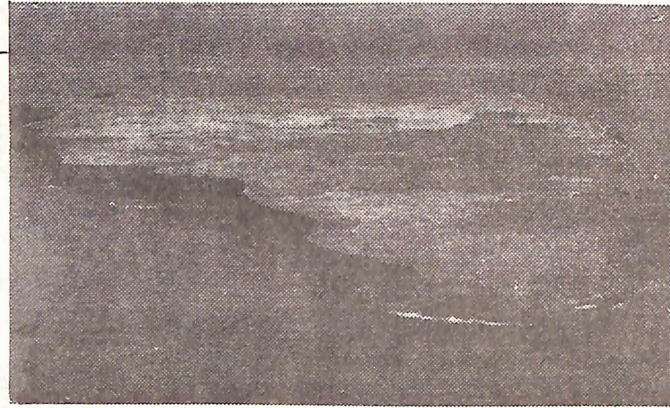
Rising sharply up from the floor of the ocean and breaking the surface to a height of 45metres is the Island of Lady Julia Percy. It is situated about 2 kms. off the coast of Yambuck in Western Victoria.

Its sheer cliffs rise vertically on all sides and there is only one place by which one can reach the top. Once on top, it is just like a table..flat. The island itself is not very large, only some 2-3 hectares. It was formed from Volcanic action; remember that the whole of Western Victoria is volcanic in origin. The coastline of Lady Julia Percy Island is dotted by rocky outcrops. The island has a very thin layer of soil on top, only 10-20 cm., but the soil is black and rich in organic matter. The vegetation found on the island consists of three groups..grassland, fernland (Bracken) and seasonal swamp, all of which require shallow root systems.

However, what the island lacks in vegetation it makes up in animal life..especially birds. Birds which nest on the island are Penguins, Muttonbirds, Fairy Prions, Diving Petrels. Visiting birds include Dotterels, Peregrine Falcons, Kestrels, Swamp Harriers, Welcome Swallows, Chats and Pipits. Three to four thousand seals inhabit the island, living in caves and on the narrow rocky beaches at the base of the cliffs. A check is kept on these by the Fisheries and Wildlife Department. Why?

Apart from the seals the only other major inhabitant is the rabbit. A pair of grey rabbits were released on the island in 1868. (When were rabbits first introduced to Australia? Where and by whom?) By 1900 the island was completely over-run and this was after several hunters had 'trapped' the island. Rabbits were taken not so much for their meat but for their skins. Why? In the late 1950's, in an effort to control this population, Myxamitosis was introduced. Find out what this is.

**THE LEGEND OF 'BIG BEN'.** Locals have it that a large White Pointer approximately 8½m. in length lives off the S.E. corner of the island. He was the centre of attention late last year when actor Lee Marvin and singer John Denver tried to catch him. Some fishermen claim that Big Ben is not the biggest; that a larger White Pointer once shook a 'Couta boat. Red this fishy story as it appeared in a local news-



This page from the Warnambool Standard has been reprinted with the permission of the Editor.

## Big Ben's no myth

Port Fairy's famed white pointer, Big Ben, is not a myth... just another big shark.

This great white pointer, believed by Port Fairy fishermen to be between 8.53 and 9.75 metres (28 and 32 feet) long has gained a notoriety far greater than his size.

Big Ben has become part of the history of the Port Fairy wharf. He now lives on as a legend, not having been sighted for at least three years.

Most fishermen have not seen him for about eight years. Some of the fishermen on the wharf last week told the story of Big Ben as they knew him.

Whether their tales of this shark have grown in magnitude over the years or not is uncertain.

They said all the older fishermen at Port Fairy had seen Big Ben at some stage.

He is known to the Port Fairy fishermen because of a big white scar on his right side and because he was always sighted around the north-east corner of Lady Julia Percy Island.



## .. HE SHAKES BOATS LIKE MATCH STICKS

Retired fishermen, Mr. Rebuen Kelly, recalled the day a shark shook his 7.31 metre boat, Shali mah, "like a match" in the sea off the north-east corner of Lady Julia Percy.

It was February about 20 years ago and Rebuen and some others were fishing for snapper shark. As they were hauling in these sharks a big white pointer at least 7.6 metres long, kept taking them.

"To try and get rid of the chains on the boat drove a gad too him, but this proved a mistake," Rebuen said.

"The big shark turned nasty and went round to the back of the boat, and the rudder in his teeth and shook the whole boat like a match."

"The rudder had to be replaced and I will be some of the shark's teeth which we had collected."

"I could not get for certain it was the Ben, but it could have been and it certainly was his territory," he said.

Rebuen retired eight years ago.

JIM Junior Torres, 42, who was born in Port Fairy for 42 years, has had many encounters with Big Ben.

He just saw him in 1955 off the north-east

corner of Lady Julia Percy. When he last saw him, about eight years ago, he says, he was more than 7.92 metres (26 feet) long.

"He was always there, hanging around the north-east corner," Jim said.

"You'd see him about three or four times a year, mainly in the

corner of Lady Julia Percy. When he last saw him, about eight years ago, he says, he was more than 7.92 metres (26 feet) long.

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corner of Lady Julia Percy. When he last saw him, about eight years ago, he says, he was more than 7.92 metres (26 feet) long.

"Leave him alone and he would leave you alone. Whenever he jumped out of the water chasing a seal the splash would be like that made by a whale," Jim said.

But Big Ben is not the biggest Jim has seen.

He once saw a 10.97

"When he lay under the boat he was nearly the same length as it," Stan said.

Stan's boat was 10.97 metres (36 feet) long.

"I saw him a couple of times about 10 or 12 years back," said Stan.

Stan said. He never caused me any trouble, but just came for a look.

There is no mystery about the Ben. He is just another big shark. We never tried to catch him. God only knows what would have happened if we had started him up.

"The same fishermen won't catch him. He has bitten the hooks made of quarter inch steel, in two," Stan said.

But he is the biggest Stan has seen in these waters here.

LEFT: Port Fairy children dwarfed by one of the monster white pointers caught off Lady Julia Percy Island. However, this shark measuring 5.18 metres was only just over half the purported length of the notorious Big Ben.

BELOW, LEFT: The jaws of this 5.18 metre (17 feet) shark could only be opened part way by two local fishermen on the Port Fairy wharf. When mounted the jaws opened more than one metre.

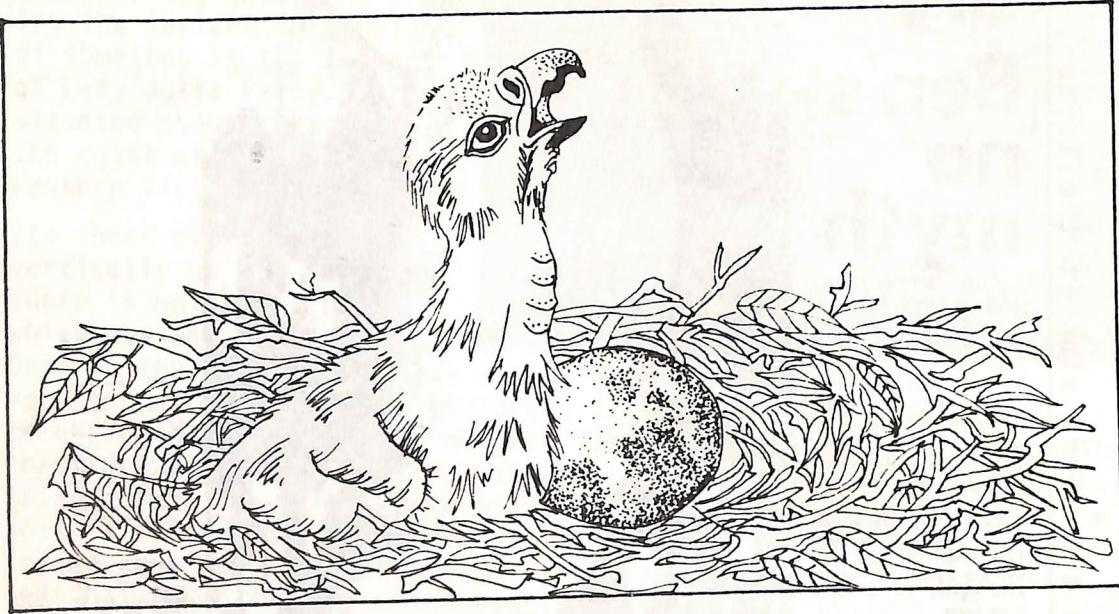
● The big shark turned nasty and went around to the back of the boat... grabbed the rudder in his teeth and shook the whole boat like a match ●

more 36 feet, white pointer south of the island.

"But Ben is the biggest shark to ever come in close to the island," Jim said.

RETIRED fisherman, Stan Torres, 42, who was born in Port Fairy for 42 years, has had many encounters with Big Ben.

He just saw him in 1955 off the north-east



I think most Australians would agree that when we think of our noblest bird our thoughts naturally turn to the majestic Wedge-tailed Eagle our largest bird of Prey.

We had an exciting find late last year when we discovered the nest of this mighty bird in a tall tree about 800 metres from home. What made it more exciting was that because the land fell steeply away from the road we were able to actually look down on the nest about 30 metres away. The road in question is aptly named Eaglenest Road, a name it bore many, many years before this nest was built. In fact it seemed that the nest was relatively new for the leaves and branches seemed as though taken that year. The nest itself was quite large, about 2 - 3 metres across and on the nest were two large "chicks". Chicks is hardly the right word for they were quite large and nearly ready to fly. Often we watched them dancing around on the nest like a voodoo dancer. As they danced they flexed their wings, getting ready for the first flight. The parent birds were rarely seen for it was their custom to fly in just before dawn with a large slice of meat. One day when visiting the nest we found that they had "flown the coop". Several days later they were seen gracefully soaring through the blue with hardly a ripple of a feather visible.

What a sight! One even landed on our fence post. And yet to think

that until last year they were an unprotected species..the prey of any trigger-happy "hunter". This evening when reading an old magazine. I discovered that twenty-five years ago in some parts of Victoria our noble eagle was "a declared pest under the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Act" - that is the authorities thought it right for it to be shot on sight. In another state people were paid a bounty to shoot it. Now of course the Wedge-tail is completely protected in our state and rightly so. When you discover what we mean by "vermin" see if you can work out the reasons why in days gone by men would set out to wipe this great bird out. I remember reading of one well-known Australian who was said to go eagle-hunting in his private plane. Can you imagine that happening now? Perhaps we are making some advances in the cause of conservation.

If you are ever driving out my way (Arthur's Creek - Strathewan) keep your eyes peeled into the blue. You may be glad you did.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Wedge-tailed Eagle can grow to have a wing span of over 3 metres. It is one of the four largest eagles in the world- the Monkey-eating Eagle of the Philippines being the largest. The average wing span is closer to 2 metres however. Nesting usually occurs during the period between July and December. The female lays 2 perhaps 3 eggs. The eggs can be off-white, spotted or blotched purple or red in colour.



Notice the beak and claws on our cover this month..Isn't it just as well that eagles don't 'dive-bomb' people like nesting magpies do sometimes! Notice too the 'fingers' on the wing tips - eagles are masters of gliding.

Eagles belong to a group of birds known as Diurnal Birds of Prey. This name simply means "Daytime hunters of meat", as distinct from Nocturnal birds of Prey (eg. owls) which hunt at night. Other Diurnal Birds of Prey include Goshawks and Harriers, Buzzards, Eagles, Kites and Falcons, Osprey Eagles, Condors and Vultures.

The last two groups of birds do not occur naturally in Australia- what can you find out about them? "Eagle" is actually the name given to large hawks, so sometimes you might hear the Wedge - tail called an Eaglehawk.

# SUPER SNAIL

mighty mollusc  
of  
the underworld

Super Snail was watching television one afternoon when there was a startling interruption ...

Unless the governments of the world agree to make me Supreme Ruler, I will set loose my monsters to devastate the Earth...

I am the Dreadful Doctor Doom ...

SIGH!  
Another power-mad professor!

Super Snail zooms to deal with the situation.

Suffering Snail shells!  
GIANT INSECTS

DO something, Mighty Mollusc, or we'll have to agree to Doctor Doom's dreadful demands.

Super Snail ponders deeply. Suddenly, he reaches a decision. Swiftly zooming to the doctor's hide-out, he faces the marching monsters and their maniacal master.

I defy you and your monsters. They're nothing but illusions.

SUPER SNAIL!

Curses! My invention which emits hypnotic waves causes people to see these illusions -

But it is useless if they refuse to believe in them

The monster insects fade away before Super Snail's eyes

But how was the Mighty Mollusc so certain the gigantic insects did not really exist?

Why couldn't a caterpillar grow into a lumbering voracious beast; or locusts roar over-head like fighter-planes? ... Because insects breathe differently from animals. Instead of lungs, tubes conduct air directly to the body cells, and this system works only for very short distances - tubes more than an inch long become inefficient. Also, insects have no inside bones to support their organs. Instead they have an outer shell. If insects grew very large their internal organs would press on each other and would not work properly.

.... THE END

# \* Variations ~

These days the mention of the word "beetle" or "beatle" many people immediately think of four long-haired youths singing "Yeah, yeah, yeah," then again many of us know beetles as hard-bodied insects of a large variety of shapes and colours which are often attracted to our lights on warm evenings.



● Whirligig Beetle  
(Maxcrogys species)



Female

Male

● Hercules Beetles

● Some beetles are BIOLUMINESCENT. This means that they produce light (not necessarily for the purpose that we would carry a torch). Fireflies are not flies but beetles. On the lower side of the female's body light producing organs are found. This enables the male to find his mate.

● Do you know other creatures which produce light?

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

# By The Beetles \*

● Whirligig Beetles feed on small insects while swimming on the surface of quiet ponds. Their eyes are divided, the lower half seeing in water and the upper half seeing in air. If you examine different types of water beetles you will find some other interesting variations.



● Rust-red Firefly  
(Metriorrhynchus species)

● The Stag beetle (Lamprima latriellei) and the Hercules beetles show a striking variation between the male and the female of the species. The male Stag beetle is larger, the jaws are more obvious and its colour is a much brighter green than the female. With the Hercules beetle the female is much smaller and has no horns.

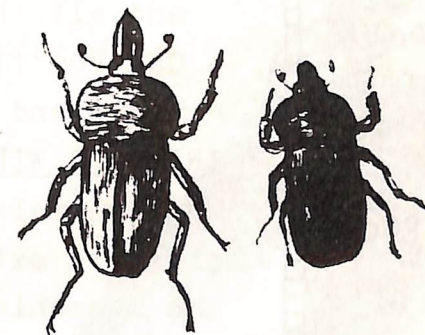
● Can you find other variations in beetles?

The editor would like to hear about them.

□ □ □ □ □ □ □



● Under side  
showing  
light organ.



● Stag Beetles  
(Lamprima  
latriellei)

Ringwood East Primary School.

# HUMANS <sup>the worst</sup> pests of all?? IS HE A KILLER?

Well, not necessarily all of them are. The Aborigines knew how to live with nature without destroying it, (see Nature Notes vol.10 no.6 to find out how they did it) but unfortunately it is taking some European Australians a long time to discover the same secret. Just look at what we've done:

INTRODUCE  
PURPLE  
PEOPLE  
EATERS  
TO  
HELP  
KEEP  
DOWN  
THE  
PLAQUE  
OF  
PEOPLE

## \* WIPED OUT OF EXISTENCE -

- the small emu of King and Kangaroo Islands,
- the Helmeted Honeyeater of the Yarra Valley,
- the Tasmanian Tiger (and even worse - the Tasmanian Aborigines as well!)
- all the original koalas of South Australia, and all the original Plains Turkeys of Victoria.
- Can you find out about these and any more?

Write and let us know please.

## \* TRIED TO WIPE OUT -

Many animals and plants have at some stage been close to extinction, including: the Tasmanian Devil, Platypus, Koala, some species of Kangaroo & Wallaby, Seals, Penguins, Muttonbirds, Ground Parrot, Mallee Fowl, Lyrebird and many more.

- \* INTRODUCED many of the pests from other countries mentioned in this magazine. Some were accidents but many like the wild rabbit and blackberries were quite deliberate!

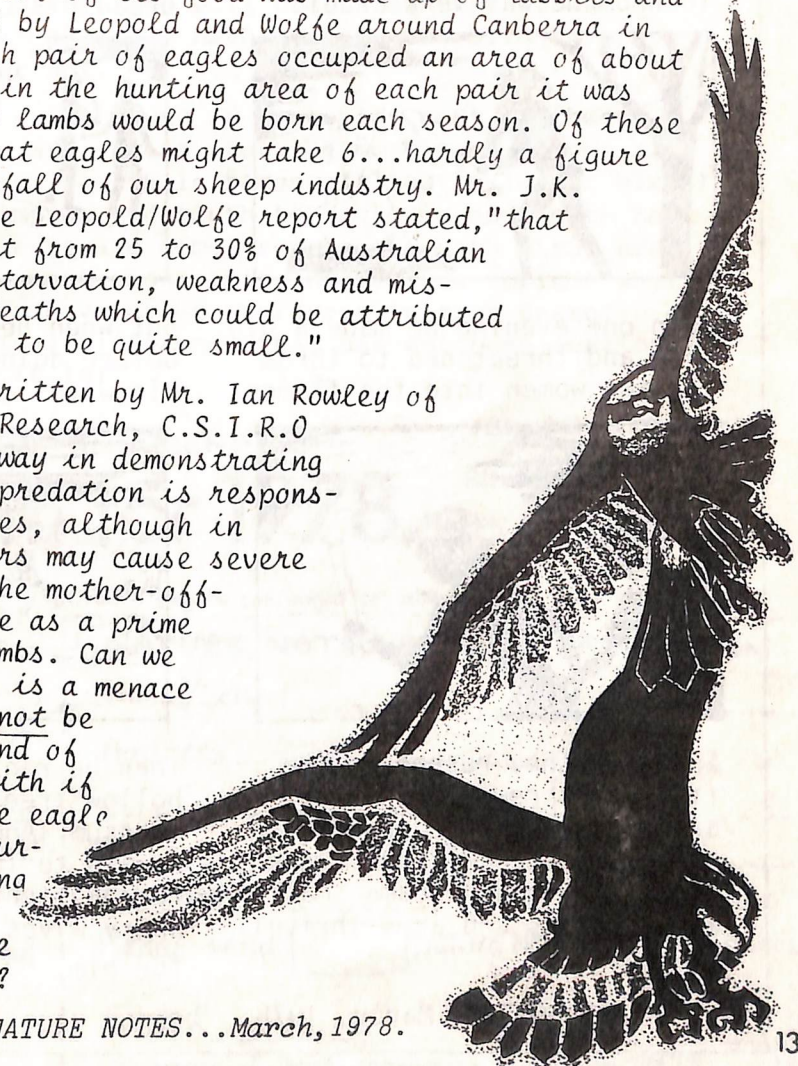
Wally bites the dust again!

Muddled thinking makes us believe so much that is not only wrong, but foolish. Many wedge-tailed eagles have been seen killing lambs, or was it that people thought that they saw them killing lambs? These lambs may have been already dead before the eagles got to them. In any case if a person sees eagles killing lambs is this enough reason to hunt eagles or even suggest that all eagles kill lambs?

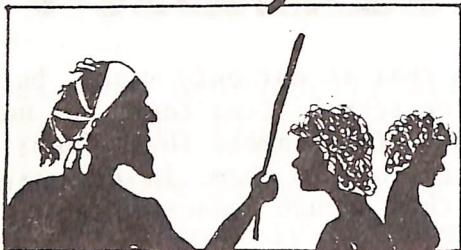
Research conducted by Wildlife Research Offices of the C.S.I.R.O establishes that in areas surveyed, lamb remains constituted about 7% of the eagle's diet while 60% of its food was made up of rabbits and hares. Research conducted by Leopold and Wolfe around Canberra in 1970 established that each pair of eagles occupied an area of about 19 square kilometres and in the hunting area of each pair it was estimated that some 4,000 lambs would be born each season. Of these these it was estimated that eagles might take 6...hardly a figure that would cause the downfall of our sheep industry. Mr. J.K. Dempster, in reviewing the Leopold/Wolfe report stated, "that when it is considered that from 25 to 30% of Australian lambs normally die from starvation, weakness and mis-mothering the number of deaths which could be attributed to nesting eagles appears to be quite small."

This report and another written by Mr. Ian Rowley of the Division of Wildlife Research, C.S.I.R.O Canberra, go much of the way in demonstrating that neither disease nor predation is responsible for most of the losses, although in certain flocks these factors may cause severe damage. A breakdown in the mother-offspring bond is identifiable as a prime factor in the death of lambs. Can we simply say that the eagle is a menace to the farmer and should not be protected by law? What kind of answers can you come up with if someone tells you that the eagle is a pest? Are wildlife surveys useful in establishing whether an animal or bird should be protected? Is he still hunted for a bounty? In which state/s is the eagle protected?

NATURE NOTES...March, 1978.



# The Legend Of The Possum.



Once there was a quarrelsome man who had two young wives to whom he was very cruel.



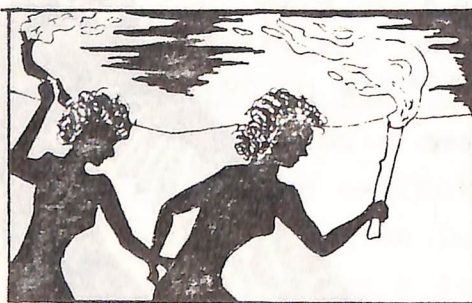
These wives became affraid of their evil husband and used to dread his coming home at night.



Then one evening he made a big fire and threatened to throw the two women into the flames.



But when he sat down to rest before doing this terrible deed his wives decided to kill him.



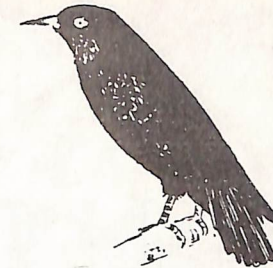
Suddenly they rushed to the fire and threw hot wood and ashes over their husband, and as he screamed with pain and terror his body became smaller and his legs and arms shrivelled up.



Then he ran away and hid in a hollow tree where he became an opossum. And even now he is afraid to leave that tree in the daylight for he thinks his angry wives are still waiting for him.



## CROWS OR RAVENS?



The bird that you call a crow is probably a raven, although it would be very difficult to prove this unless you could actually hold the bird and examine it carefully. You see the only real obvious physical difference between the two is that beneath the outer black feathers, the crow has snow white body feathers while the raven has grey. If you have ever tried to sneak up close to one of these birds, you will understand why it is suggested that you will actually have to hold the bird to prove whether it is a crow or not.

As there are very few crows found in Victoria, most of those big black birds we see are ravens. For the most part, crows are found in Northern Australia, while ravens (slightly larger birds) are found from Rockhampton and south to Victoria and South East Australia. Of course there are some areas where both birds are found. Try to find out more about this interesting topic - what about Tasmania..Do they have crows or ravens in that state? There is another physical difference that has not been mentioned. Can you discover what it is?

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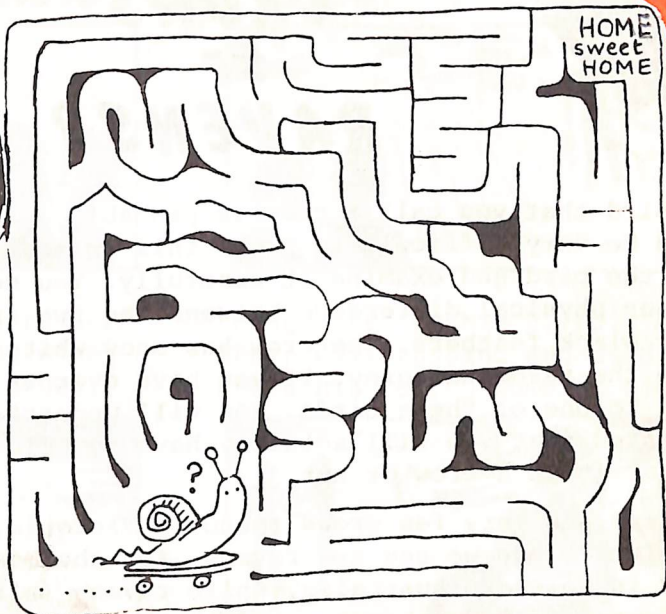
10 issues of each magazine again in 1978.



FISH!

I	S	H	E	R
F	D	P	Q	C
T	L	O	R	H
U	C	A	U	E
E	N	I	D	N

Spell out answers by moving to adjoining squares. There are 13 fish. Good luck!



⤴ Poor old James Snail went out skate-boarding and got lost. Can you help him get home?

NATURE NOTES: P.O.Box 28,  
RINGWOOD EAST. 3135.PH:879 1263

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.)



Funny how it starts raining every time we try to light a fire!