



**NATURE**  
NOTES

**VOL.15. No.6.**



# EDITORIAL.



I trust that you have found the last two issues of Nature Notes both worthwhile and useful. There has been some heavy reading, hasn't there? Well, this month we've tried to make things a little easier for you. I'm pleased to be able, at last, to include a couple of letters from our readers. Also we acknowledge letters received to date. Thankyou to those readers who have taken the time to write to us. We will be printing more letters in subsequent issues. Have you been learning some interesting things about nature at school or by making interesting observations yourself? If you have, write to us and let us know. We'd be happy to pass on any items of interest to all our readers. This month we are re-introducing the "Things To Look For" column. Perhaps you could begin your holidays by trying to seek out the suggested plants/creatures.

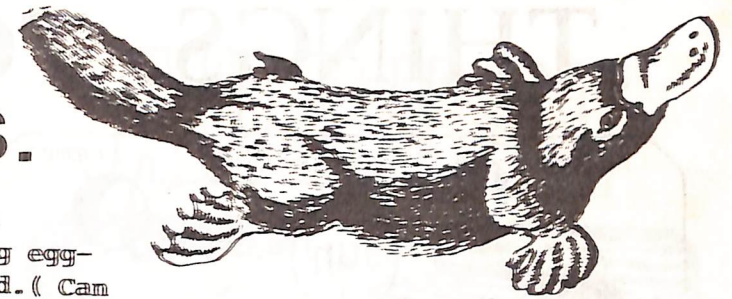
School holidays are with us this month...What are you going to do? Perhaps you could plan some interesting excursions such as a visit to the Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary, the Botanic Gardens, the Melbourne Museum or even the Melbourne Zoo.. that is if you live around

Melbourne! Whatever you do have a safe, enjoyable holiday...and try not to always be 'under mum's feet.. she could do with a break too. Think of ways in which you could best occupy yourself - pages 4 and 5 could well provide you with your starting point. Happy Holiday!

*B. L. Whibald*  
Editor.

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# The Platypus.

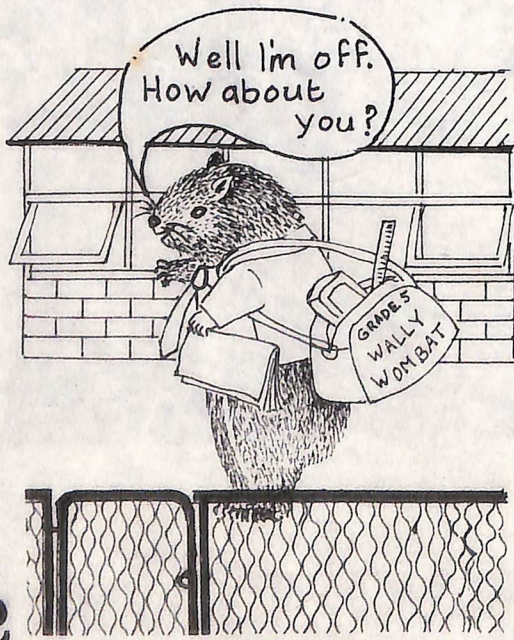


Australia's platypus is a very famous animal, for it is one of the two remaining egg-laying mammals in the world. (Can you name the other one?) Its scientific name, *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*, (what a mouthful!) is Greek for a "creature with a bill like a duck", and indeed early settlers used to call it the duck-bill platypus. The bill is not hard like that of a duck and really combines the nose and the lips of other furred animals. Though it lays eggs as birds and reptiles do, the platypus is a true mammal, as is shown by its furry skin and by the fact that, after hatching out, the young feed on milk from the mother.

The platypus is found in Tasmania and all along the eastern coast of Australia. He is never more than 60 cm. in length and has a flat body with a broad tail which acts as a rudder when swimming and diving. The leathery "bill" or muzzle is very sensitive and guides the platypus while it is feeding on muddy creek beds, when the nostrils are tightly closed...like the eyes and ears. (If the platypus is disturbed, it makes a sound resembling a continuous scolding growl, somewhat like that of a puppy.)

The platypus feeds on worms, snails, yabbies and various kinds of insect larvae or grubs living in underwater mud. After diving to the creek bed it nuzzles under stones and sieves the mud through its sensitive lips coming to the surface to chew its catch. Horny 'plates' on the jaws, which replace the milk teeth of the young, are used for grinding the hard-shelled food. The platypus can stay under water only a few minutes and must come to the surface at regular intervals.

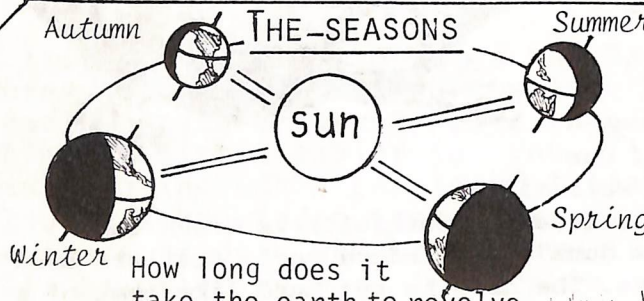
Burrows are of two types. One for use as common living quarters and the nesting burrow, built alone by the female. The entrance is usually above water level. The winding tunnel may be up to 18 m. long and has several 'dead ends'. Why? Is the platypus protected by law? What are the natural enemies of the platypus? Find out more about this "Australia"





# THINGS TO LOOK

**THE SEASONS**




Autumn Summer Spring Winter


How long does it take the earth to revolve yellow-box around the sun? Which was the coldest month in your district this year?

**Borers**

When you are cutting wood watch for different kinds of borers. See how many you can name. Have borers any legs? Why? Buildings and furniture are attacked also. How do you know?



*Uracanthus* ↑  
timber borer



Cypress eaten by small diadoxus borer

**Blossoms**

Make a list of wild-flowers blooming now. Which is out first--Early nancy or scented sun dew? What other shrubs are out in bloom?



Pussy willow



Yellow star




Brown boronia



field daisy

**BIRDS**

Not all all swallows migrate. Watch and see when they appear in great numbers.



Swallow feeding young

Make a list of birds around your garden now. Where does the magpie-lark build its nest? Have you noticed wrens building their nests yet? What do they eat?




Silver eye



Magpie-lark


# FOR IN AUGUST

**Thryptomene**




Japonica

Which are native to Australia? Which wattle blooms first in your district? What colour is the pussy willow?

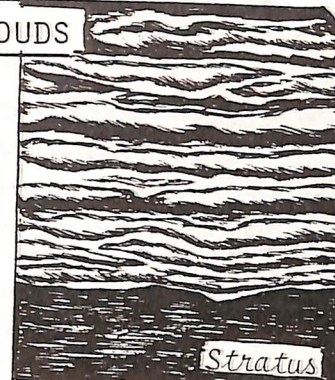


Scented sundew

**CLOUDS**




Cumulus




Stratus

What kind of weather will these four types of clouds likely to bring?



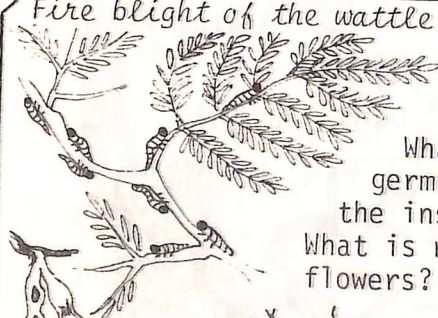
Cumulo-nimbus




Cirrus

**WATTLE**

Fire blight of the wattle




Female of wattle scale (enlarged)




Wattle scale


What do seeds need to germinate? Can you find the insect that cause galls? What is necessary to pollinate flowers? What does the ichneumon fly destroy?




Seed pod



Ichneumon fly



Fire blight larva (enlarged)



Flower galls



# Wonderoo

AND CO.

CRIME BUSTERS OF THE  
UNDERGROWTH

TEXT... H.J. Lawry

ARTIST... Mrs A. Dunstan

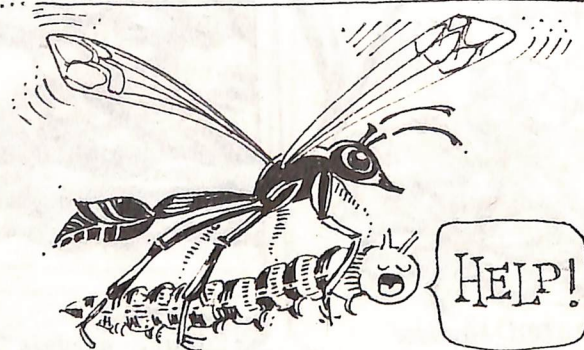
zlip zliz  
n znizz !!

Very well  
Casper  
I'll look  
into it!

Wonderoo has just heard a complaint that caterpillars are disappearing by the dozen...



Hiding in the scrub near a caterpillar infested tree Wonderoo sees what is happening...



Mrs Mud Dauber is taking them away, she can carry many times her own weight

Wonderoo follows her and sees her make trip after trip bringing home caterpillars and sealing them up in her nest

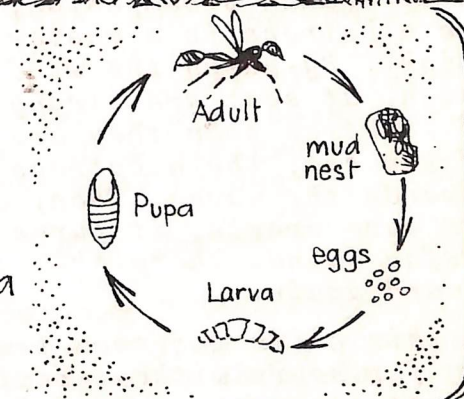


Wonderoo approaches and tells her of the complaints...

But this is the way we wasps survive, I'm just collecting food you know.

Oh! tell me more

Mrs Wasp explains the life cycle of the wasps and how the caterpillars stay fresh until they become food for the larva when it hatches out...



So you see Wonderoo it's all part of Nature's plan...

**AWK!**

I must be off that bird is after me !!



And that's part of Nature's plan too! But how will I explain this to the poor caterpillars?\*

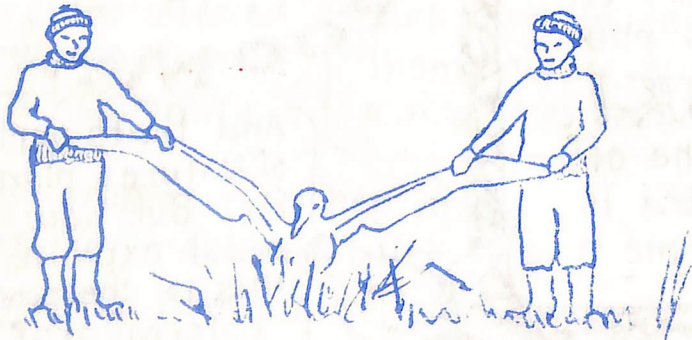




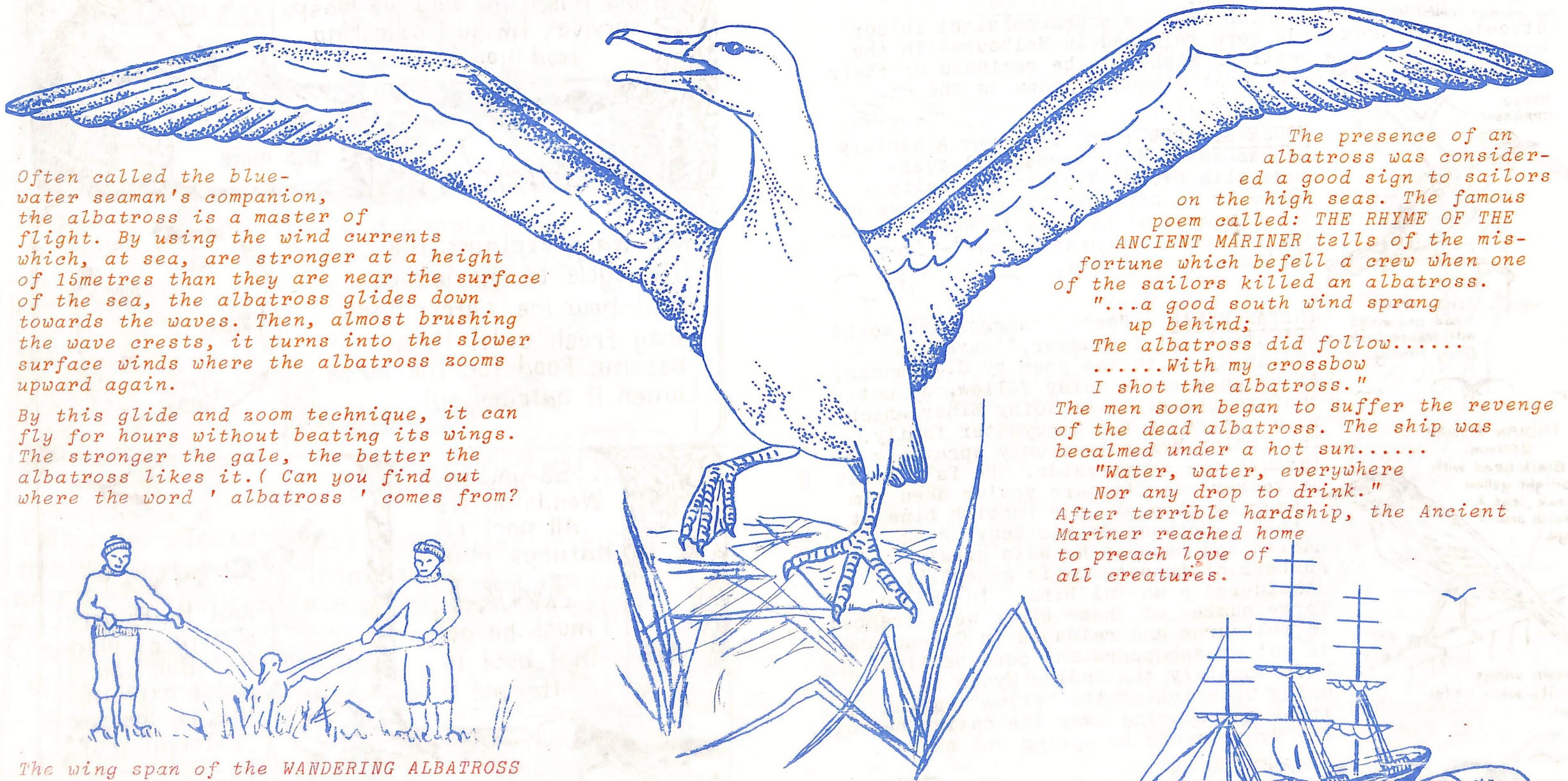
# THE ALBATROSS

Often called the blue-water seaman's companion, the albatross is a master of flight. By using the wind currents which, at sea, are stronger at a height of 15 metres than they are near the surface of the sea, the albatross glides down towards the waves. Then, almost brushing the wave crests, it turns into the slower surface winds where the albatross zooms upward again.

By this glide and zoom technique, it can fly for hours without beating its wings. The stronger the gale, the better the albatross likes it. (Can you find out where the word 'albatross' comes from?)



The wing span of the WANDERING ALBATROSS may measure almost  $3\frac{1}{2}$  metres.



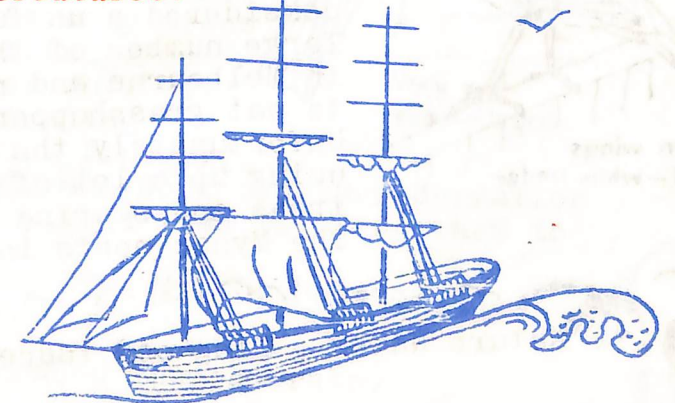
The presence of an albatross was considered a good sign to sailors on the high seas. The famous poem called: THE RHYME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER tells of the misfortune which befell a crew when one of the sailors killed an albatross.

"...a good south wind sprang up behind;  
The albatross did follow.....  
.....With my crossbow  
I shot the albatross."

The men soon began to suffer the revenge of the dead albatross. The ship was becalmed under a hot sun.....

"Water, water, everywhere  
Nor any drop to drink."

After terrible hardship, the Ancient Mariner reached home to preach love of all creatures.

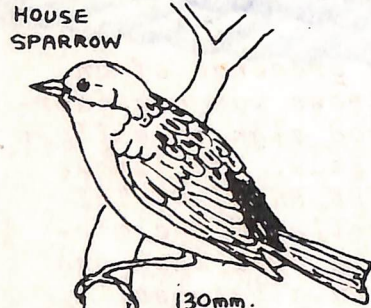




# 'migrants' that stayed... INTRODUCED BIRDS, by L. Delacca.

I wonder if you realize that not all the familiar birds you see in and around our suburbs have always been a part of our Australian scene.

Many species which are now a common sight in our streets and back yards were released in Melbourne in the early 1860's. The settlers wished to be reminded of their homeland. Probably the most common of them is the



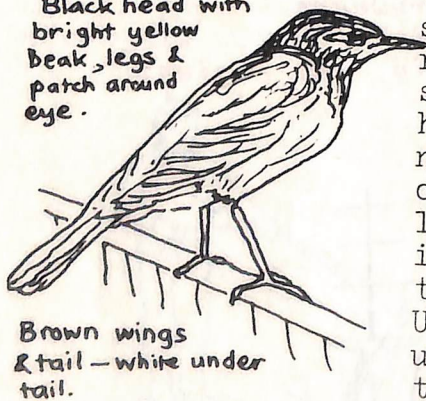
HOUSE SPARROW

130mm.

Light brown head and wings with orange flecks. Grey tummy.

HOUSE SPARROW : In just over a century he has managed to spread all over Australia except Western Australia - where he is strictly banned because of the damage that he does to wheat crops. You can see them nesting now - from September to January.

INDIAN MYNAH : "an' I swagger an' scold an' strut an' I swagger," says the Indian Mynah in the poem by C.J. Dennis. Although he is a noisy fellow, do not confuse him with the Noisy Miner which is a native of the Honeyeater family. The Indian Mynah is slowly spreading through the countryside. He is a great scavenger and I'm sure you've seen him rummaging through your rubbish bins at school. Because of his scavenging habits and because he eats great numbers of insects he is generally considered a useful bird. In 1883 a large number of these birds were trapped in Melbourne and released in Queensland to eat grasshoppers and cane beetles. Unfortunately the Indian Mynah is using up a lot of the hollow nesting trees and scaring away the native parrots. The Mynah nests in spring and summer.



INDIAN MYNAH 250mm.

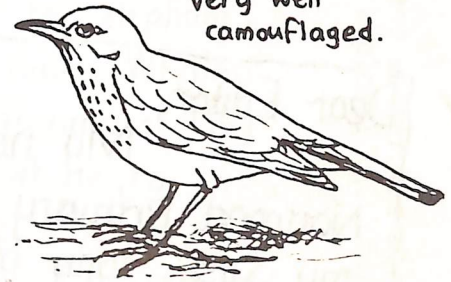
Black head with bright yellow beak, legs & patch around eye.

Brown wings & tail - white under tail.

A welcome visitor to my Nunawading garden was the shy but friendly SONG THRUSH : or as we called him - The Speckled Thrush. Last spring a pair of these useful birds brought up their family in one of the trees in our garden. The Song Thrush is one of the few birds to eat the garden snail. We have often watched him as he cracked the snail's shell open by banging it against a rock, then eating the snail with great gusto.

SONG THRUSH 230mm  
Brown-wings, head & tail with light brown specks on grey tummy.

Very well camouflaged.



On a recent trip to South Australia we often saw a small grey bird hovering above the grassland singing its heart out. This bird is one of the few introduced birds protected by law - The BRITISH SKYLARK : whose song has been made much of by poets. He is difficult to see on the ground but easy to spot when he rises - often vertically - into the air.

I have mentioned only a few of our many introduced birds. Make up a list including all the others and their country of origin. Some have become pests in many areas (E.g. the starling and blackbird) - see if you can discover why. If you can find out their feeding habits this may help you. Finally, watch out for these birds and work out by observation whether you feel it was a good idea to bring them to our shores.

SKYLARK 180mm  
Golden grey-brown back - grey tummy.

Very well camouflaged.



Mr. L. Delacca.



# Letters! Letters!

At long last we have some letters to print. A special thankyou to the children who have written to us this year. It is not possible to write to you all, but at least we can print your name in Nature Notes. If you have not written to Nature Notes, write soon. For letters that we do print, book prizes are awarded.

Dear Editor,

My name is Linda King and I go to Norwood Primary school. The other day I got my first copy of Nature Notes: Volume 15 No.1 It is a very good magazine, I enjoyed it very much.

## PARMA WALLABIES

One of the rarest Australian Wallabies is the Parma Wallaby (also called the White Fronted Wallaby), which was long thought to have been extinct. However, long ago, Sir George Grey introduced an Australian Wallaby into New Zealand, and in 1965, it was discovered that this Wallaby was the Parma Wallaby, and, it has been now re-introduced into Australia.

Nola Gibbons, Barbara Ross, Santha Traill, Karen Gaylard, Fiona Richardson, Karen Taylor, Sandra White, Fiona Fell, Lisa Beaud, Patricia Alvarez, Jacqueline Read, Phillip Parkinson, Christine Lindsay, Gabrielle Pate, Lisa Johnson, Craig Archer, Lisa Banyard, Ian McGillivray, Gail Lorimer, Claire Millot, Jenny Smyth, Mildrid Koenders.

A "big" thank you to all these children for your interesting letters...

Smyth, Mildrid Koenders.

PLEASE REMEMBER, THAT WHEN YOU WRITE TO US, PUT YOUR ADDRESS CLEARLY ON YOUR LETTER!



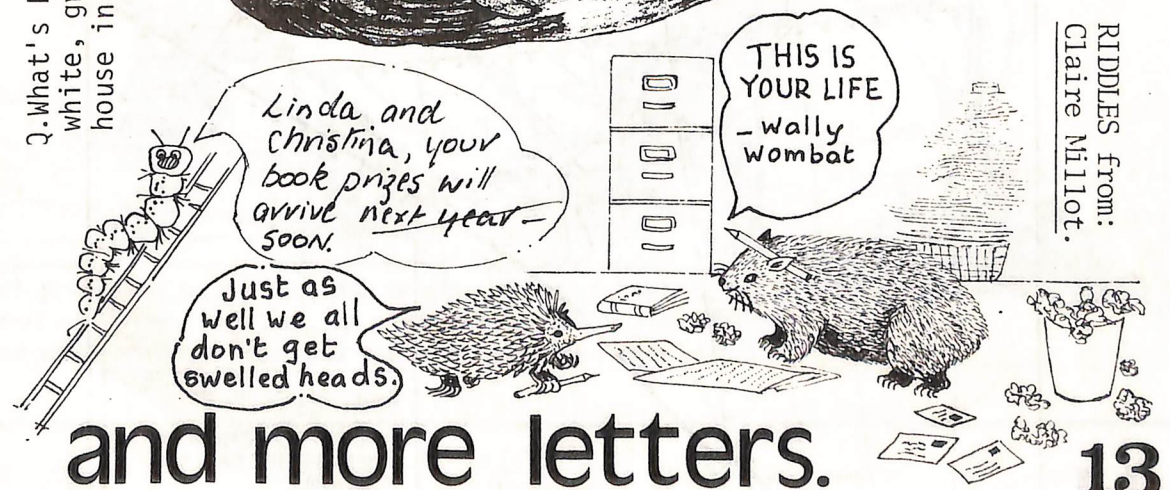
Q. What's black and white and red? A. A penguin with nappy rash! Q. What's white, green and white? A. A frog sandwich! Q. What's the smallest house in the world? A. A mushroom! RIDDLES from Kathryn Sinderberry

## THE GREAT WHALES.

The great whales are the largest animals to ever live. No dinosaur, not even the giant Bronrosaurus was as big. If a large whale could stand on its tail, it still would be higher than ten elephants, one standing on top of the other. Whales are not fish, they are mammals. They breathe air. The biggest whale to live is called The Blue Whale. The large whales have a few enemies. One of the whales enemies is called The Killer Whale. The great whales find their supply of food in different parts of the ocean at different times. They move from colder water back to warmer water and then back again.



by Christina Jang



and more letters.

Q. What gets wetter and wetter the more it dries? A. A towel! Q. What goes ha, ha. kaplonk? A. A man laughing his head off!

RIDDLES from: Claire Millot.

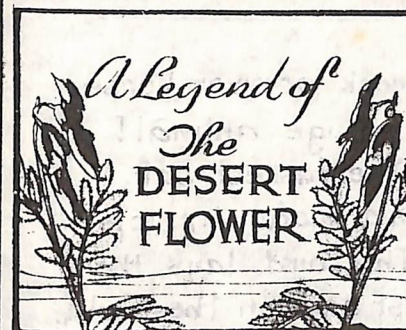
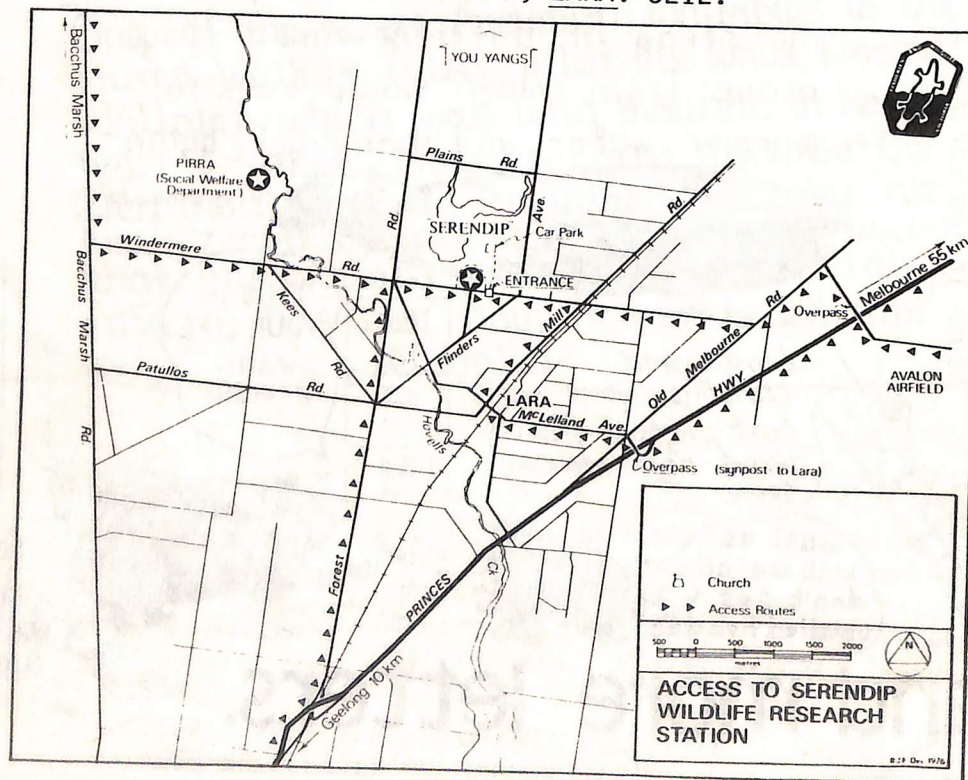




# ~ SERENDIP ~

Did you know that the Fisheries and Wildlife have established a Wildlife Research Station at Lara, near Geelong? Serendip, as it is known, was established in 1960. It was then essentially a farm property of 350 hectares with a central 32 hectare artificial lake. Both the lake and the surrounding land have been modified and developed to cater for a wide range of wildlife species that co-exist with normal agricultural practices on the farm. Research facilities have been progressively built up so that a range of wildlife species can be kept in large natural enclosures for study and to develop breeding and management techniques to assist their conservation.

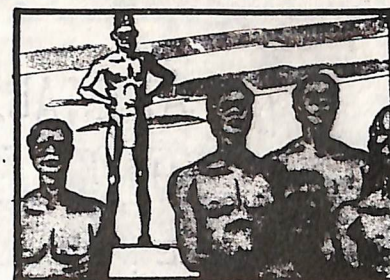
Populations of magpie geese, brolga, Cape Barren geese, bustards, rat kangaroos and bandicoots are some of the species that have been brought to the station for study and attempts are being made to re-establish those species that have become rare or have disappeared from Victoria. Visits to the station can be arranged but only by prior arrangement. Applications should be addressed to: OFFICER IN CHARGE, SERENDIP WILDLIFE RESEARCH STATION, P.O. BOX 2, LARA. 3212.



Many years ago there were two young people who were deeply in love and wanted to be married.



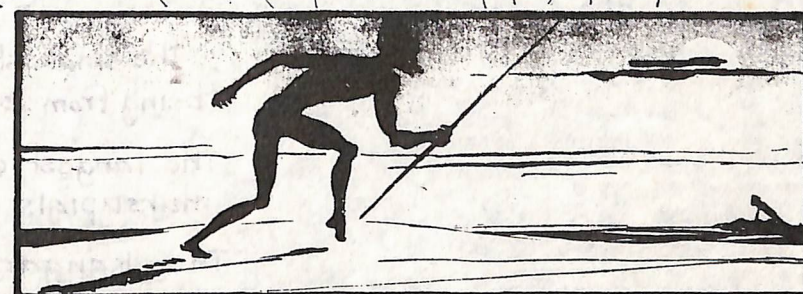
But the old tribal chief wanted the girl for himself and told his warriors to kill her lover.



But the warriors would not do this; nor would they do anything to hurt such happy sweethearts.



Then the chief was angry and sent the lovers into the desert, and took his spear to kill them.



And one sad night, while the sweethearts slept in the lonely wilderness, the evil chief killed them; but when their warm blood fell on the ground bright red flowers came from the soil.



Each year, even to this day, the sweethearts come back to the desert as flowers, and bow their beautiful heads as the gentle wind softly whispers their sad love story over and over again.





ANIMALS from AFRICA! 1. Greek for river horse.  
2. Abuse animal.

1. H
2. E
3. C
4. G
5. O

1. Greek for river horse.
2. A huge animal!
3. The fastest cat.
- 4 A graceful Antelope.
5. This bird lays the largest eggs in the world.

MEMBERS OF THE  
KANGAROO FAMILY

The smallest member being from 10" to 18" high. kangaroo

The largest of all marsupials is the kangaroo

This kangaroo is not a ground dweller...

This little fellow has a pointed snout and short round ears. it lives along the East + South coast of Tasmania ...

# ALPHABET ANIMALS

- 1 A
- 2 B
- 3 C
- 4 D
- 5 E
- 6 F
- 7 G

1. A "deathly" snake.
2. A dancing bird.
3. A desert animal.
4. Wild Australian Dogs.
5. Three of these animals work for the P.A.W organization!
6. A sly animal. \$ Protect All Wildlife.
7. The second largest reptile.

↓ Can you keep going right through the alphabet? Write clues as well!