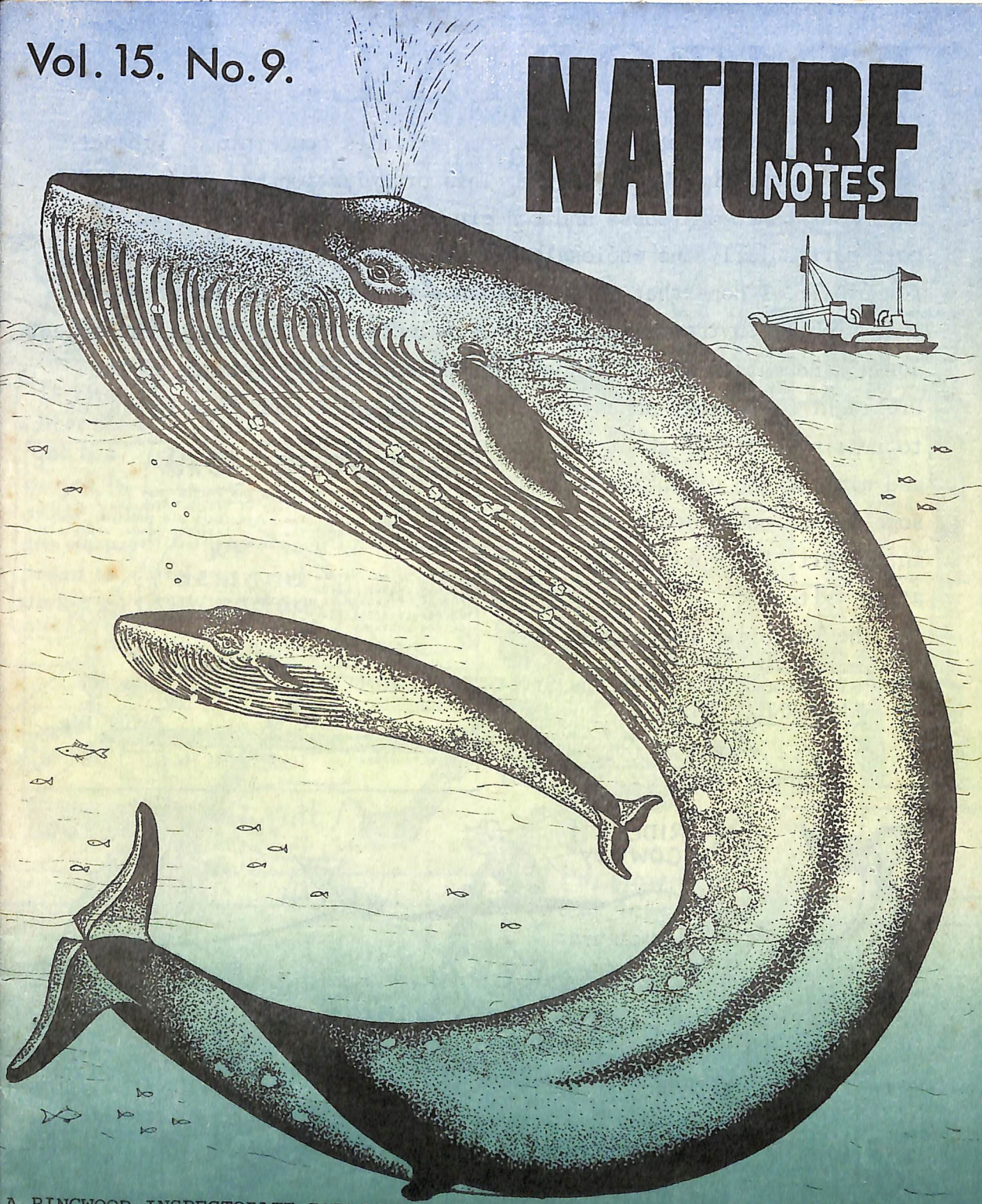


Vol. 15. No.9.

NATURE NOTES



EDITORIAL:

This month Nature Notes features some articles concerning "Project Jonah" - Save the Whale Program. This organization has done much to increase public awareness and concern about the treatment of whales, more particularly the wholesale slaughter of the giants of the deep - for profit. I hope that you will gain a more conscious awareness of this problem in the articles we have selected for printing from Project Jonah's Education Kit. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the President of Project Jonah-Victoria, Mr. Ken Harrison in allowing us to reprint articles about the work and aims of the organization and some of the educational material in the kit. For further information write to:

The Victorian Environment
Centre,
1st. Floor, 324 Williams St.,
MELBOURNE. 3000.

B. L. Anibaldi.
EDITOR.

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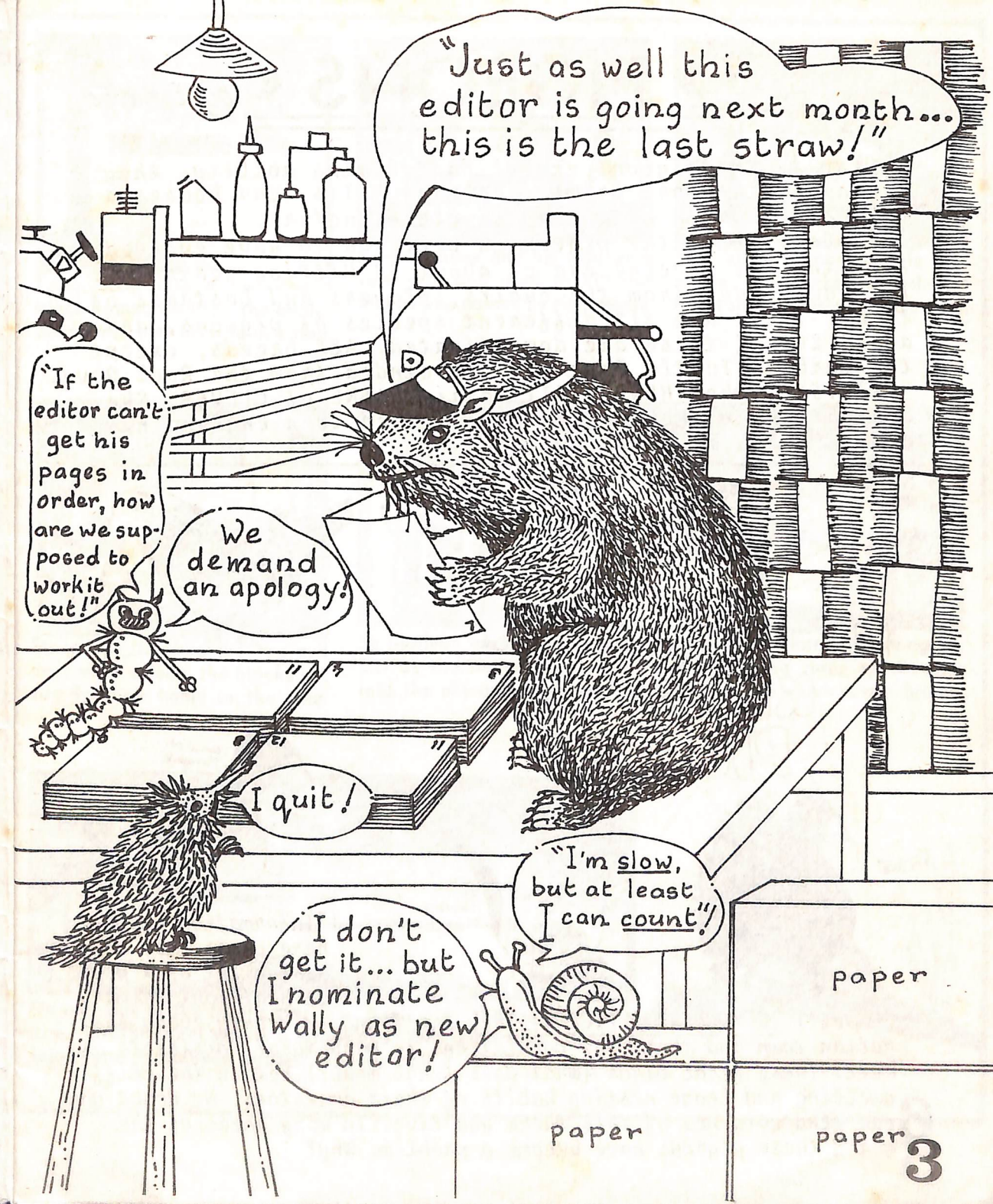
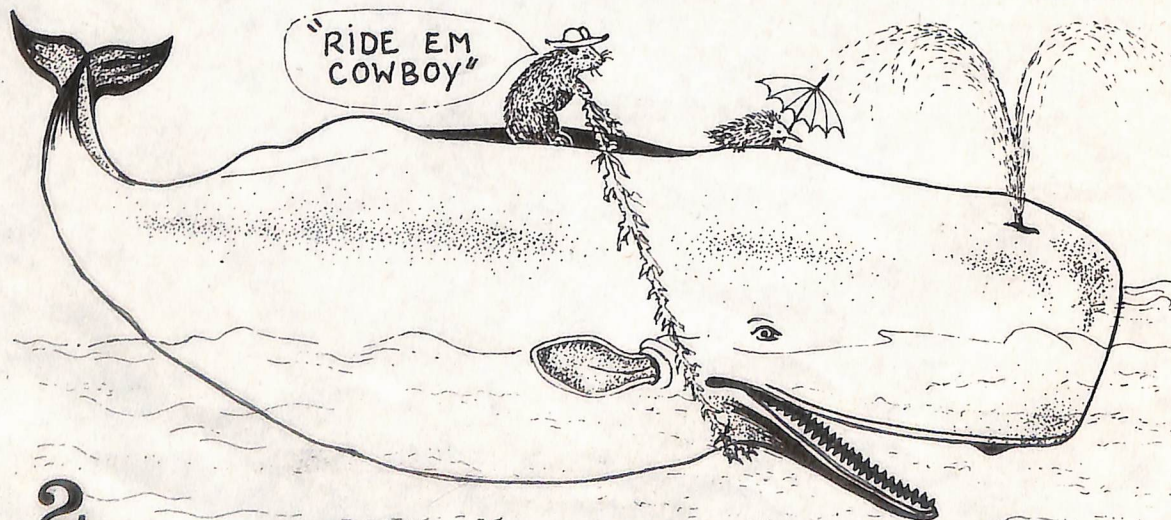
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NATURE NOTES AND

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PROBE.



» PIGEONS « by E. Beattie

Despite the pigeons exceptional homing ability, they are among the more primitive birds. Its head houses a very small brain of a very simple structure.

Zoologically, the pigeon is believed to have evolved from the Pre-Miocene era of about 30 Million years ago. They descended from the quails, plovers and bastards of today. There are 812 different species of pigeons, and about 200 of these are domesticated. All breeds, except the Barbary Turtle Dove are descended from the Rock Dove.

In 1541, when HENRY VIII married ANNE of CLEVELS, She brought the pigeon to England. Since then England has become the home of the pigeon.



DIFFERENT KINDS OF PIGEONS



(*Information supplied here comes from an assignment of a pupil at Heathmont Primary

School.) THE DOMESTIC PIGEON: They are found in nearly every Australian town and there are populations in many rural districts as well. These feral birds (What does feral mean?) retain the cliff-dwelling and ledge-nesting habits of their ancestors. No doubt you can find evidence of this where you live! In many areas of the world these pigeons have become a problem. Why?



Long, long ago a one-armed black named Mullyan the eagle-hawk lived with his wife in a tree.



Both Mullyan and his wife were very evil, and used to kill any blacks who passed by their home.



They killed so many people that at last the blacks decided that Mullyan and his wife must die.



So one night while the two evil ones were asleep, the blacks set fire to their home in the tree.



So Mullyan and his wife died and could never harm people again. But as the flames died down in the morning three sparks rose into the sky and are now three stars, one of which is very bright.



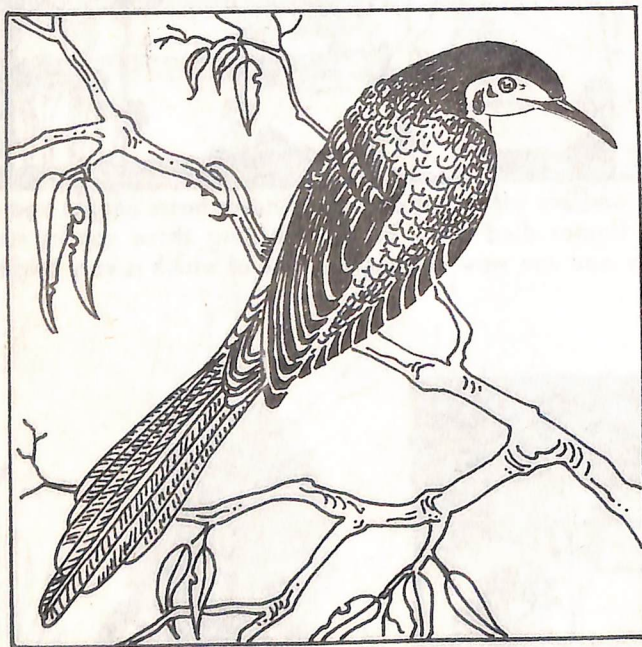
On one side of the bright star is a small one; that is Mullyan's arm. On the other side is a larger one; that is his wife. But the bright star is Mullyan himself, and we call it the Morning Star.



BIRDWATCHING IN THE

With the coming of Spring, you may have noticed a lot more birds around the school-ground.

An idea I had for the children in my grade some years ago was to go for a walk around the school and observe the birds. It shouldn't take very long, but it may be very worthwhile. However you do need to be alert and observe carefully. I generally take a notebook along just to jot down anything new I notice; especially in relation to new and unusual birds.



If you see any bird you don't know, write a brief description of it in your notebook. This should include:

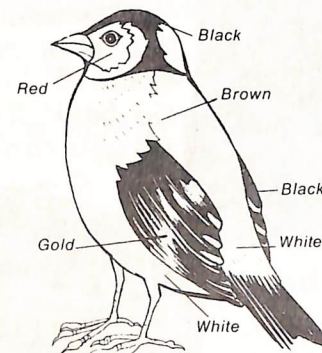
- color of feathers,
- color and shape of beak,
- color of legs,
- what it was doing,
- its call and its flight.

When I return to my room, I refer to the GOULD LEAGUE GUIDES, Volumes 1 and 2. These two books are a good guide to the Birds generally found around our school. However, they may not suit your school's location. You may need one of the other guides. There are 6 in the set and most school libraries have copies of them.

Nature Notes....November 1978.

SCHOOL GROUND

As you continue your Birdwatching Activities, keep a record of your sightings. Over a period of 5 years, the children and teachers have built up quite a comprehensive list of birds sighted within our school boundaies. The total is now 53 species.



Draw a picture of any bird you do not recognise. Note the shape of its beak, and the colours of its plumage. Later on, you can look the bird up in an identification book.

Maybe you could start a "Birdwatchers" Club at your school and build up a list of Feathered Visitors. You could keep this list in the Library so that it can be kept for future generations of school children.

Maybe someone has already done this. If so, compare your list with the old list. *Has the list changed? If it has changed can you think why it may of changed?*

Consider the future. Will a list you compile this year be the same in 5-10 years time? Why? How can you ensure that future generations will able to view all our native birds?



SCHOOL

BIRD

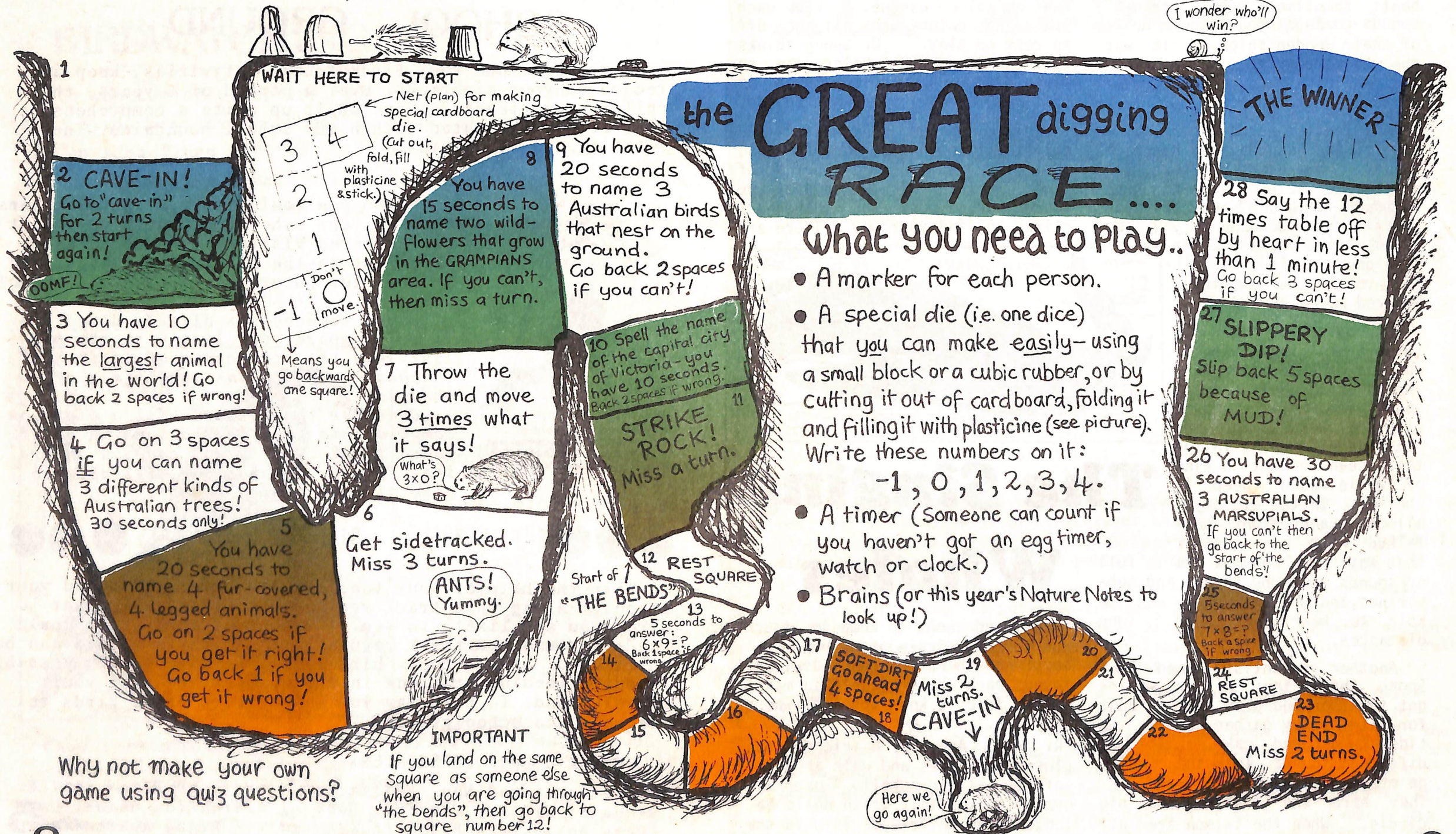
WALK.



With the help of your teacher plan a track around your school. Along this track you can put signs as to what birds you are likely to see. A member of your grade could wander around the track regularly so a that a record can be built up of the school bird life. It may be even possible to build feeding stations in the quieter areas of your schoolground. In this way you may attract other birds to frequent the schoolground.

OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES:

Passerines and Non Passerines, both by Peter SLATER.
Readers' Digest, Complete Book of Australian Birds.
Every Australian Bird Illustrated, Rigby Australia.



Men who hunted whales in small boats sometimes heard strange sounds coming through the hulls of their wooden ships. It was the whales singing. Now we know that whales use sound to communicate with each other.

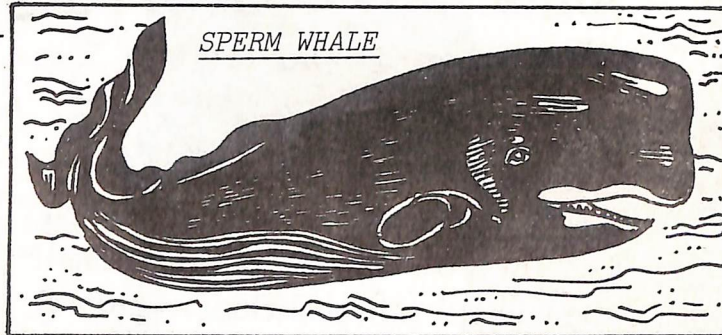
A scientist named Roger Payne studies the sounds of humpback whales. He has found that the whales use their songs to keep in touch with one another over great distances. So if you see a whale that looks like it is alone, it might be 'talking' to another whale a hundred miles away.

Dr Payne also found out that there is a special current of cold water deep in the ocean that carries sound very well. Maybe all the whales in the ocean are listening in on this ocean current- a kind of "whale radio" deep in the sea. In the old days, all the whales might have talked with one another that way. But now the sea is full of sounds made by ships and submarines, and the whales may not be able to hear over such long distances.

Another scientist named Paul Spong thinks that killer whales get together and plan how to hunt for salmon. They gather before the tide turns and make a lot of different sounds. Then the whales go off to round up the salmon. They herd the fish into a big circle. When the salmon are all inside, different whales go into the ring to feed, while others

patrol the outside to make sure that no salmon escape. When each whale has eaten, they all go off to rest or play. Dr Spong thinks that the reason the whales make so many sounds before the hunt is that they are planning what to do.

So now we see that whales and dolphins live in a world of sounds, just like we live in a world of light. Think of how complex the sound world must be. There are clicks to find your way. There are



The Singing Whales

sounds and songs to keep in touch and to communicate plans and problems. And there are the individual sounds each whale or dolphin makes to let friends know who and where they are.

TRY THIS. Ask 6 or 8 friends to close their eyes and walk around softly saying "hello" over and over. Can you tell which hello belongs to which friend? This is the way that whales keep in touch with one another.

ALL ABOUT...

THE WORK, AIMS AND IDEALS OF PROJECT JONAH, VICTORIA.

The Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser, has set up a national Inquiry into Whaling in Australia. It began on April 27 and is presided over by Sir Sydney Frost. There is no compulsion upon the Government to necessarily take any action as a result of the Inquiry.

Project Jonah- the only group solely devoted to saving the whale- is representing the anti-whaling cause, with strong moral support coming from other like minded groups.

* We are fighting to save the whale in two main areas:-

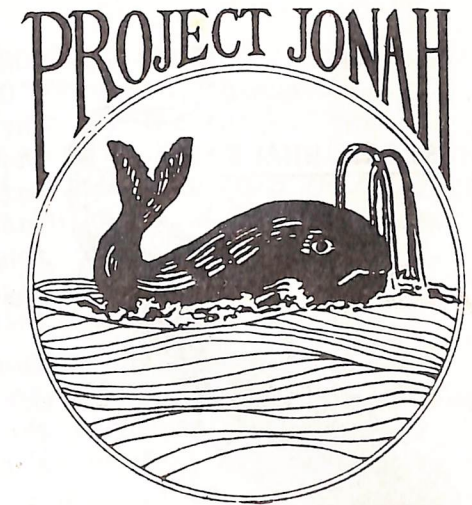
* We have prepared a 500 page main submission to the Inquiry. It has taken months of dedicated work and many thousands of dollars to produce. It covers every aspect of whaling and has been written by experts in their field. We trust that it will persuade Sir Sydney that whaling should be stopped.

* Because we also believe that the evidence of overwhelming public support for the whale will give Mr Fraser and his Government a clear mandate to end whaling, we have set out to obtain one million individual submissions from the Victorian public before the end of September.

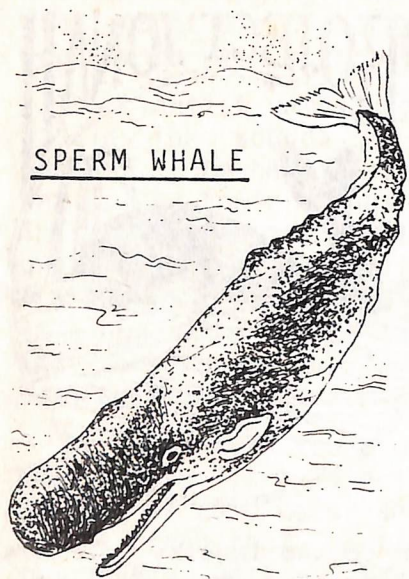
* The Project has also a 67 page "Resource Kit" written especially for schools and giving all possible information about the whale. It contains clear and understandable scientific information, student assignments, songs, whale games for the littlies, a Project poster and a multitude of drawings, sketches and cartoons.

* The Project has recently written to 4000 Victorian schools offering each and every one of them a Resource Kit free of charge. As at August 6 Bob and his committee had distributed over 1500 kits and the orders just keep rolling in. The kits are available to all others for \$2.50, which is cost price plus postage, and may be ordered from the Education committee c/o Bob Whiteway, 78 Abbott St, Sandringham, 3191.

* The Project has the quite invaluable aid of dedicated workers who man stalls to sell Project Jonah T-shirts, badges, car stickers, etc, as well as distributing literature. These efforts, plus membership are our main source of income.



Meet some Whales...



SPERM WHALE

CONSIDER THE LIFE STYLE OF THE GREAT BALEEN (TOOTHLESS) WHALES.

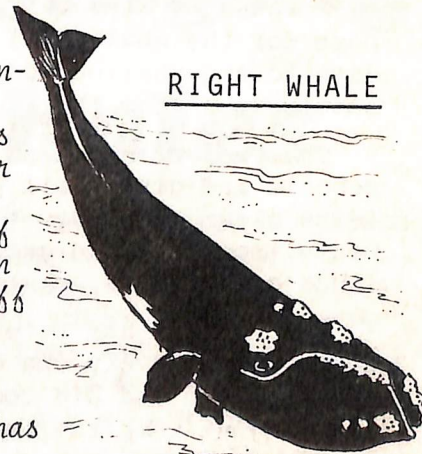
They spend 2/3rds of the year feeding on the protein-rich krill which abound in the cold waters of the Arctic and the Antarctic. So vast is this food supply that they may gulp a tonne of these "shrimp" in one mouthful. For eight months the outer layer of blubber grows thick as they feed in the quiet depths.

As winter closes in and these waters begin to ice over, the schools and families migrate to the warm waters of the tropics. They will not eat for the next four months.

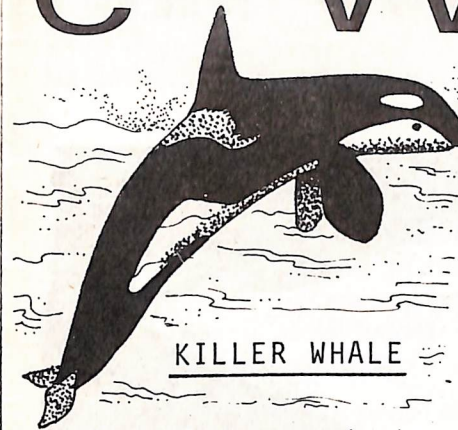
When the calves are born they must quickly grow a covering of blubber to protect themselves from the cold waters to which their parents will now take them.

HOWEVER... just as the great whales prey on the tiny krill, so they have formidable enemies. But what creatures could possibly tackle these marine giants? The answer is 'few'.

SWORDFISH For some reason swordfish occasionally go into a berserk fit of aggression and ram anything in their path. They will do this at top speed and without any regard whatsoever for their own safety. Some have killed themselves whilst attempting to pierce the hull of steel ships. Even those who have succeeded in penetrating wooden hulls have only a broken off sword for their trouble. The same may happen if their quarry is a whale. They may inflict terrible pain, but it is unlikely that they would kill the whale. So once the swordfish has made his penzied thrust, he must either break off his sword or suffer the possibility of remaining attached to the whale's side. Fortunately for both swordfish and whales, such attacks are rare.



RIGHT WHALE



KILLER WHALE

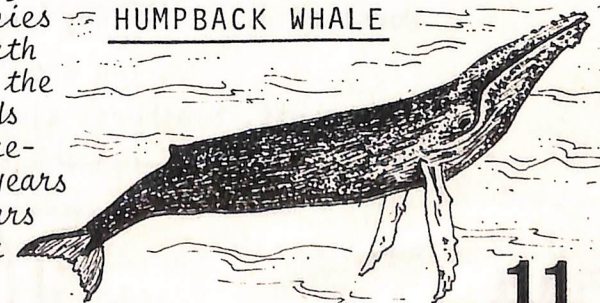
KILLER WHALE The giant whales' second enemy is one of its own members - orcinus orca, the killer whale. These are the largest members of the dolphin "family". Their speed and power is awesome and it has been said that there is no creature in the ocean which they fear.

Their staple diet is fish, though they eat penguins, seals, dolphins and other sea mammals.

Killer whales are highly intelligent and usually hunt in packs according to a prepared plan. Occasionally they may attack a whale three times their size. They can inflict no fatal blow to such a gigantic animal and must work together for hours, weakening the hapless creature by tearing at its blubber and attempting to secure a grip on its lips. Unless the whale can discourage the killer with the powerful blows of its tail, the killer pack may succeed in tearing out its tongue which they regard as a delicacy. Mercifully, these attacks are also uncommon; so in the pristine state of nature, the great whales had little to fear and generally led a peaceful and happy life.

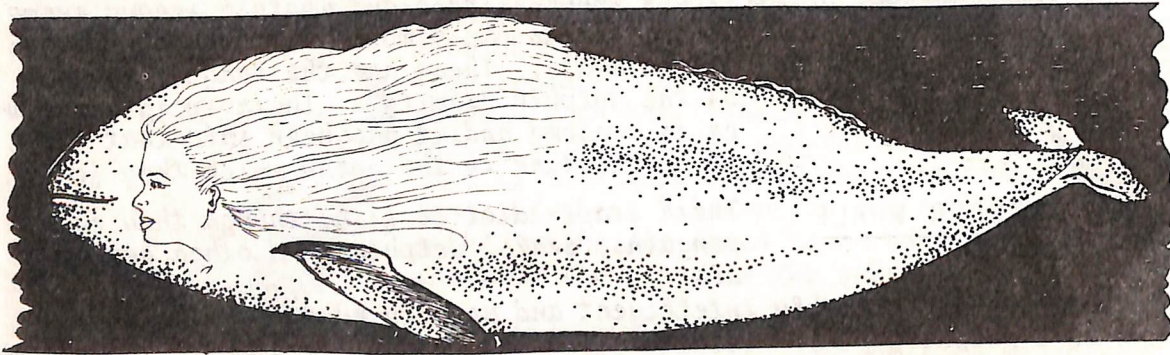
THE RUTHLESS PREDATOR The third animal to prey on whales is man and his impact has been devastating. For centuries he has attacked whales with spears, lances, nets, septic arrows, poisons and harpoons. However, they were not seriously threatened until the invention of the harpoon gun fitted with an explosive head. This device was perfected by the Norwegian sealer, SVEND FOYN in 1868.

Now with the aid of fast catcher boats, sonar underwater trackers and spotter planes, man is able to hunt down and kill these magnificent creatures at will. This he has done without mercy or foresight. As a result, the race of west pacific gray whales has become extinct. Six species have become so rare as to be not worth hunting. Species which once roamed the oceans in their hundreds of thousands now number a few thousand. Whales returned to the sea about 25 million years ago, and yet in the space of 50 years man has brought many of them to near extinction.



HUMPBACK WHALE

IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE A WHALE.



You are huge.

You weigh more than three thousand people.

But you do not feel heavy.

The water makes you light and cradles you.

Thick fat, called blubber, warms you, even in icy water.

You sing whale songs over hundreds of miles, calling to your friends.

You grew up drinking your mother's milk, and you breathe air.

You live in big friendly families.

You easily swim thousands of miles to follow your food.

You are so big that you have no real enemies except one: people.

A long time ago, people saw you as a devil fish.

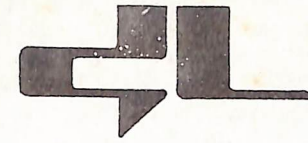
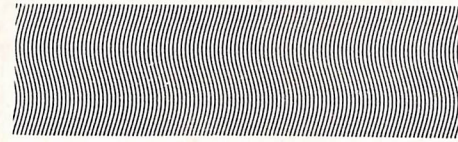
You frightened them, you were so big.

Worst of all, now they see you only as a product.

You are lonely.

Your parents, brothers, sisters and friends are gone.

You swim, calling your songs over long distances.



GOULD LEAGUE
OF VICTORIA

67 HIGH ST TEL 51 1701 51 4109
PO BOX 446 PRAHRAN 3181

The Gould League was formed in 1909 in answer to public concern at the apparent danger to bird life from collecting, shooting, nest-robbing and habitat destruction. As well as this, the destruction of the birds meant that man himself would be harmed if nature's balance was not maintained. So children in the State of Victoria were asked to "care for the birds". Children who joined the League were asked to undertake a pledge, which was,

"I hereby promise that I will protect native birds and will not collect their eggs. I also promise that I will endeavour to prevent others from injuring native birds and destroying their eggs"

This pledge lasted until 1971 when the Gould League decided that not just birds, but protection of the whole environment, was most important. So the pledge was changed to

"I promise to protect all wildlife and the place in which it is found.

I will try to help others understand why this action is necessary"

The Gould League publishes material related to the preservation of all forms of wildlife -

Any child may join -

The membership fee is \$4.00

which covers the period of January to December of that year.

Affiliation forms are available from

Gould League

P.O. Box 446

Prahran. 3181

ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S INSECT PUZZLE: ACROSS: 1. Legs, 3. Ladybird, 4. Dragonfly, 7. Beetle, 9. Ant, 10. Spider, 11. Bee, 12. Fly, 13. Wasp, 14. Butterfly. DOWN: 2. Grasshopper, 3. Long, 4. Daddy, 5. Caterpillar, 6. Woodlouse, 8. Earwig,

COMMON GARDEN BIRDS

Can you identify these birds? Check your answers with the Gould League Bird Chart No: 4.

