

Vol.16 no3



# nature notes

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## HI !

This month's feature article is about Lizards. Did you know that there are over 400 species of lizards in Australia? The largest being the Monitor Lizard which is over  $2\frac{1}{2}$  metres in length, while the smallest are the skinks and geckoes which barely make 7 cm. in length.

'Bye for now, and have a safe holiday

safe holiday  
John Bull  
EDITOR.

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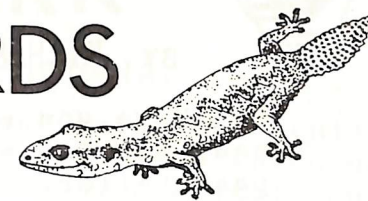
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OUR COVER.

Our cover drawing for this month is taken from a photograph "shot" by Mr. P. Crosbie Morrison in the Organ Pipes National Park. It was kindly supplied to us by the National Parks Service.


Velvet Gecko

Velvet Gecko



Stone Gecko

DID YOU KNOW THAT.....

- \* Lizards are really very timid creatures. They will open their mouth, put their tongue out and hiss at you when they are frightened, but they will not harm you.
  - \* No Australian lizard is venomous. (poisonous)
  - \* It is not true that if a lizard bites you, - you don't come out in a sore each year. (But if one does bite you, you will have a sore finger for about half an hour!)
  - \* Never touch or pick up a hibernating lizard. They breath only about once a minute and the shock would kill them.
  - \* Lizards store fat in their tails for the winter months.
  - \* Most lizards lay eggs but blue tongues have about 7 live babies in late summer or autumn, while shingle backs have only one live baby, about half the size of the mother!
- Shingleback and baby*
- 

The illustration shows two shingleback lizards. On the left is a small baby lizard, and on the right is a much larger adult lizard. Both have a distinctive pattern of large, overlapping scales that resemble shingles on a roof. They have short, stout bodies and small heads.
- \* Shingle back lizards are called various names - Stumpy Tails, Boggi, Pine Cone Lizard, Double Headed Lizard, probably because of their short fat tail (appoximately 8 cm long) predators could be confused as to which end was the head!
  - \* Some lizards are believed to live for 20 or more years.
  - \* Never force a sick lizard to eat, if you do the food is not digested, and it rots in the stomich, and the lizard would probably die. They know when to eat. Leave fresh food for them and they will eat it when they are well again.



Shingleback and baby





# ORGAN PIPES

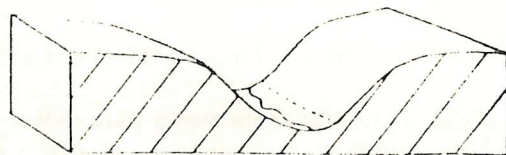
BY MICHAEL HOWES

EDUCATION OFFICER

Have you been to ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK? It's near the Calder Raceway, just off the highway 8km past Keilor.

A few visitors expect the organ pipes to play a tune! - but of course they don't. They are huge columns of Basalt, a rock that came out of the ground as molten lava about one million years ago. In this particular spot the lava filled an old creek valley and so was very deep and took a long time to cool down. Also it wasn't disturbed while cooling. And so the pipes or columns were formed as the lava cracked and shrank. (You can see similar six-sided patterns when mud dries out and cracks after rain.)

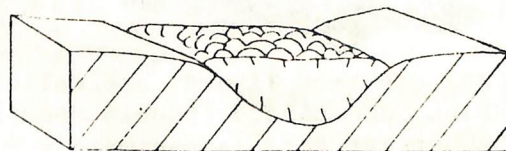
We wouldn't be able to see the pipes today except that Jackson's Creek has cut away the rock in front of them and revealed them. Other interesting rock formations here are the Rosette Rock and the Tessalated Pavement.



*Valley cut into older rock.*

The country around the Organ Pipes is called the Keilor Plains. (You've probably been through it on the way to Bendigo.) It is fairly flat and open, with not many trees.

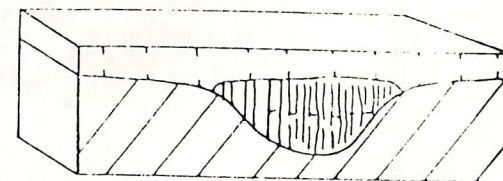
Before the white man came it was a grassy plain with lots of kangaroos, wallabies, native cats and other animals. There were more trees too, especially in the valleys. But since the 1840's it has been grazed and farmed- rabbits and



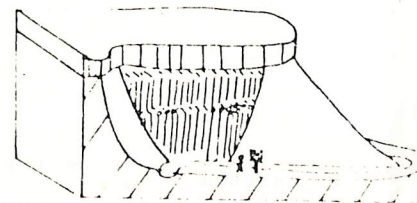
*Lava flow fills valley, cracking vertically as it cools and shrinks.*

# NATIONAL PARK

NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE, VICTORIA.



*Further lava flows spread over the plain.*



*Stream erosion forms a new valley and exposes cross-sections of the lava flows.*

foxes and weeds like thistle and boxthorn were introduced and the native animals and plants have disappeared.

So apart from protecting the rock formations, one of the reasons for establishing Organ Pipes National Park (in 1972) was to try to restore a small part of the Keilor Plains to its original state. This meant clearing away the weeds and rubbish, and controlling the rabbits and planting thousands of trees and shrubs native to the area.

Much of this work has been done by volunteers- school students, scouts and people who call themselves FOOPS (Friends of the Organ Pipes)

The FOOPS won a special medal (the Robin Boyd Environmental Award) last year for their great effort in restoring the park.

Would you like to help? Why not go out and see the park one Saturday or Sunday and talk to the Ranger. Or you could ring Mr. Don Marsh, who organizes the FOOPS. His number is 379 4928.

There's a lot more to learn about Organ Pipes National Park, you can read the information leaflet about it when you go. Some people think it's an uninteresting and bleak place at first- it's not a beautiful national park like Wilson's Promontory- but it grows on you, and when you know it you really get to like it!



# THINGS TO LOOK FOR DURING.....

## BIRDS IN WINTER

Migration of birds will probably be completed this month. Watch for the arrival of bird migrants. Where do these winter visitors spend the summer? Keep a record of birds that are seen singly, in pairs, or in flocks.

Pied currawong

Flame breasted robin

White-fronted tern

Banded dotterel

## MOVEMENTS OF BIRDS

Sparrow

Galah

Black-fronted dotterel

Compare the ways in which birds move. Make a study of the manner of flight of different birds.

## CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

As night falls, many creatures begin the search for food. Where do these creatures spend the day?

Most of our marsupials move about at night. Foxes and rabbits (natural enemies) eat at night. What useful work does the fox do? The owl flies by night. Its flight feathers are adapted for silent flight. The owl's food is an indication of creatures that move by night. Explain the meaning of "balance of nature" by a study of the creatures shown on this chart.

Snails and slugs appear after the autumn rains. Try to find some. Many spiders spin webs at night. A study of the webs will reveal a variety of night-flying moths. How do moths find flowers at night? In the house, cockroaches and silverfish are nocturnal feeders. Look for the harmless native cockroaches. Mice and rats are rodents.

# MAY

## SPIDERS

How are spiders beneficial?



Red-back or jockey spider



Trapdoors

There are three main types of lid. Try to find an example of each.

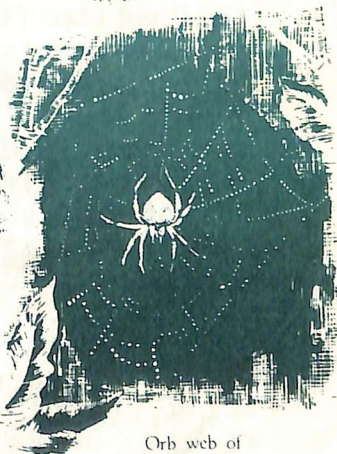


Hunt-man spider



Wolf spider

Why is it called "wolf"?



Orb web of garden spider

What is the use of the web? How is it made? Find as many types as you can.



# THIS <sup>AND</sup> THAT <sup>by</sup> L. DELACCA.

What a beautiful month Autumn is with the changes it brings! It signals the changeover from the burning winds of February to the icy breath of winter. Autumn is the season of maturity, ripe fruits on the vine and the start of decay, the fall of the leaf and so on....

Some exciting things happen in Autumn. A few days ago on a thunderstormy afternoon I was very pleased to see the sky alive with diving, darting bodies. Yes you've guessed it - they were swifts, very well named as they are said to be the swiftest bird of all in level flight.

They fly to us in Spring from the Northern lands for our Summer and return in our Autumn. See if you can discover about how far these birds fly-how fast and why they make this great journey.

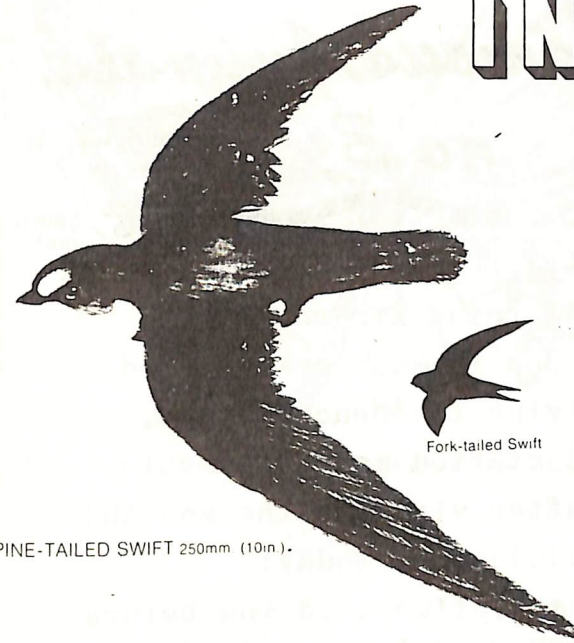
If you could get close enough to one you would see that it has extremely short legs, so short that the bird cannot take off from the ground but has to land on a cliff face or a tree so that it can *tumble* into flight. I've seen many swifts but never have I seen one anywhere else but in the air.

Another bird that likes our southern summer coastline also migrates this season- parents first and "babies" a few weeks later. Can you guess its name? If you've been to Phillip Island you probably won't have much trouble.

We haven't had a lot of rain this Autumn but already I have seen the first puffballs poking up their snowy heads. We will need much more rain before you can go out looking for "mushies". See what other fungi you can discover and put out a display on your *Nature Table*. Remember some are poisonous; some are edible but unpalatable; some are delicious but all are interesting.

Why do we cut mushrooms with a knife instead of pulling them up. Some people probably think we do this so as to not to disturb their roots, BUT mushrooms have no roots. There may be possibly others developing nearby underground so if we cut them we do not disturb the ground. Besides it also helps to keep our basket clean.

## IN AUTUMN



SPINE-TAILED SWIFT 250mm (10in.).

Fork-tailed Swift



EARTH STAR



DISCUS FUNGI

We cannot be really definite when mushrooms will appear. It all depends on the weather- a long period of warm rains with crisp autumn nights in between. Then watch out!

Find out how fungi develop- not from a seed like many plants but in a much more interesting process.

Last weekend while in Gippsland I was delighted to again make the acquaintance of a pair of handsome butterflies-the *Wanderer* or more correctly known as the Monarch. The *Wanderer's* story in Australia makes fascinating reading: Many years ago we had no *Wanderers* here, until the beautiful Monarch Butterfly of Northern America decided to migrate westwards. It is believed that numbers of them flew across the Pacific stopping to breed at islands on the way. After each stay on an island the descendants would set off for the next island until finally reaching the Australian mainland. We were so impressed with its travels that we called the newcomer "The *Wanderer*", appropriate don't you think.

Drawings on this page come from the GOULD LEAGUE Books, "Birds of Victoria- Urban Birds", and "Junior Survival - Fungi". These books are available from the Gould League, P.O. Box 446, Prahan, 3181.



To the zookeeper, San Diego Zoo. 11/12/63

Dear Sir,  
When I visited  
your zoo recently I think  
I saw a 2 headed snake!  
Could you please confirm  
this? You see I'm having an  
argument.....

# Famous Animals, no 3

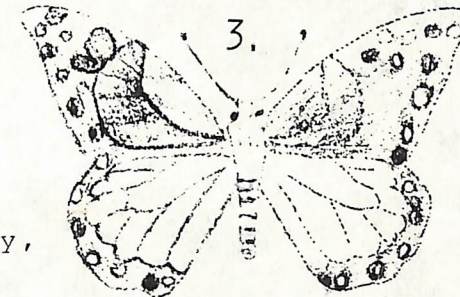
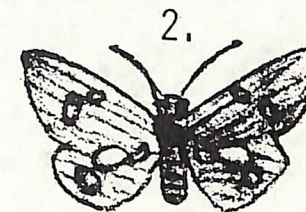
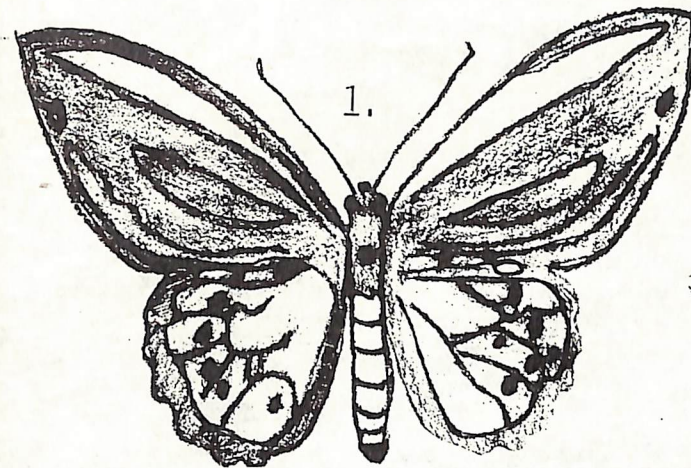
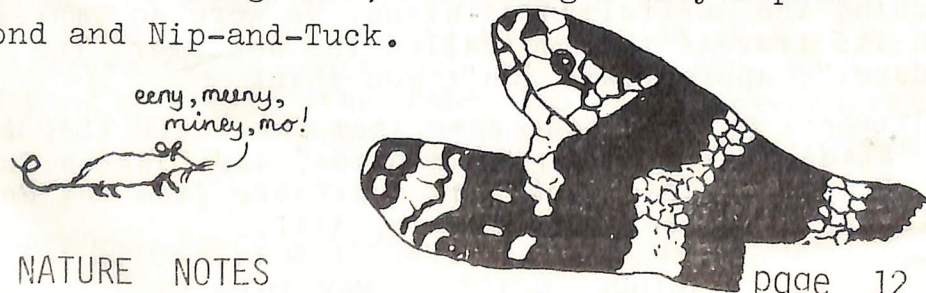


DUDLEY DUPLEX - The two-headed  
Californian Kingsnake.

In 1953 the San Diego Zoo in America acquired Dudley Duplex the First, a living two-headed snake. Dudley lived for 6½ years and started many arguments. Can you imagine coming home after visiting the zoo and saying: "Mum, I saw a two-headed snake today!"

"Don't talk nonsense son. I've told you before never to tell lies to me!" "But Mum." "That's enough! I don't want to hear anything more about it!"

The old saying, "Two heads are better than one," just wasn't true for Dudley. AT feeding time BOTH heads would fight over the same mouse - which would sometimes escape in the confusion! Poor Dudley just couldn't get it into his heads that the mouse would end up in the same stomach no matter which mouth ate it. The zoo-keepers had to help him change his old skins too! Three more two-headed snakes have been given to the San Diego Zoo, including Dudley Duplex the Second and Nip-and-Tuck.

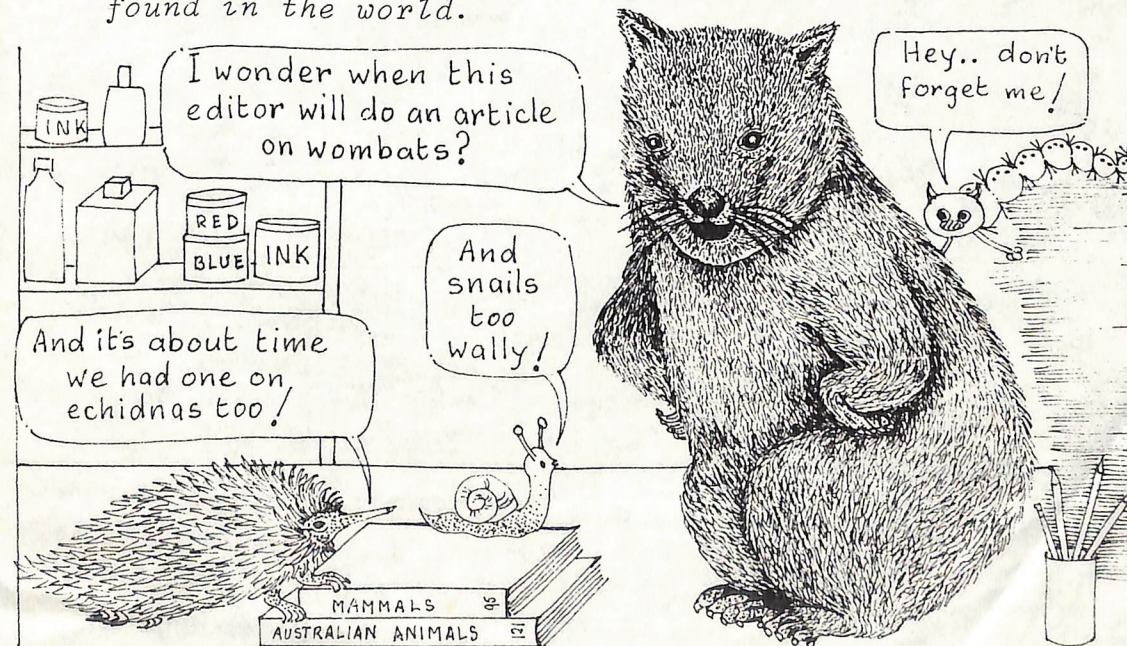


Butterflies: 1. Birdwing Butterfly,  
2. Regent Skipper,  
3. Wanderer or Monarch.

a. A moth has a thick, plump body, while a butterfly has a thin body.

b. Moths seldom have a knob on their antennae, but a butterfly always has a small knob.

There are over 90,000 types of butterfly found in the world.





# MYSTERY MESSAGE

2 - 25 - 18

\* 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

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.

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.)

