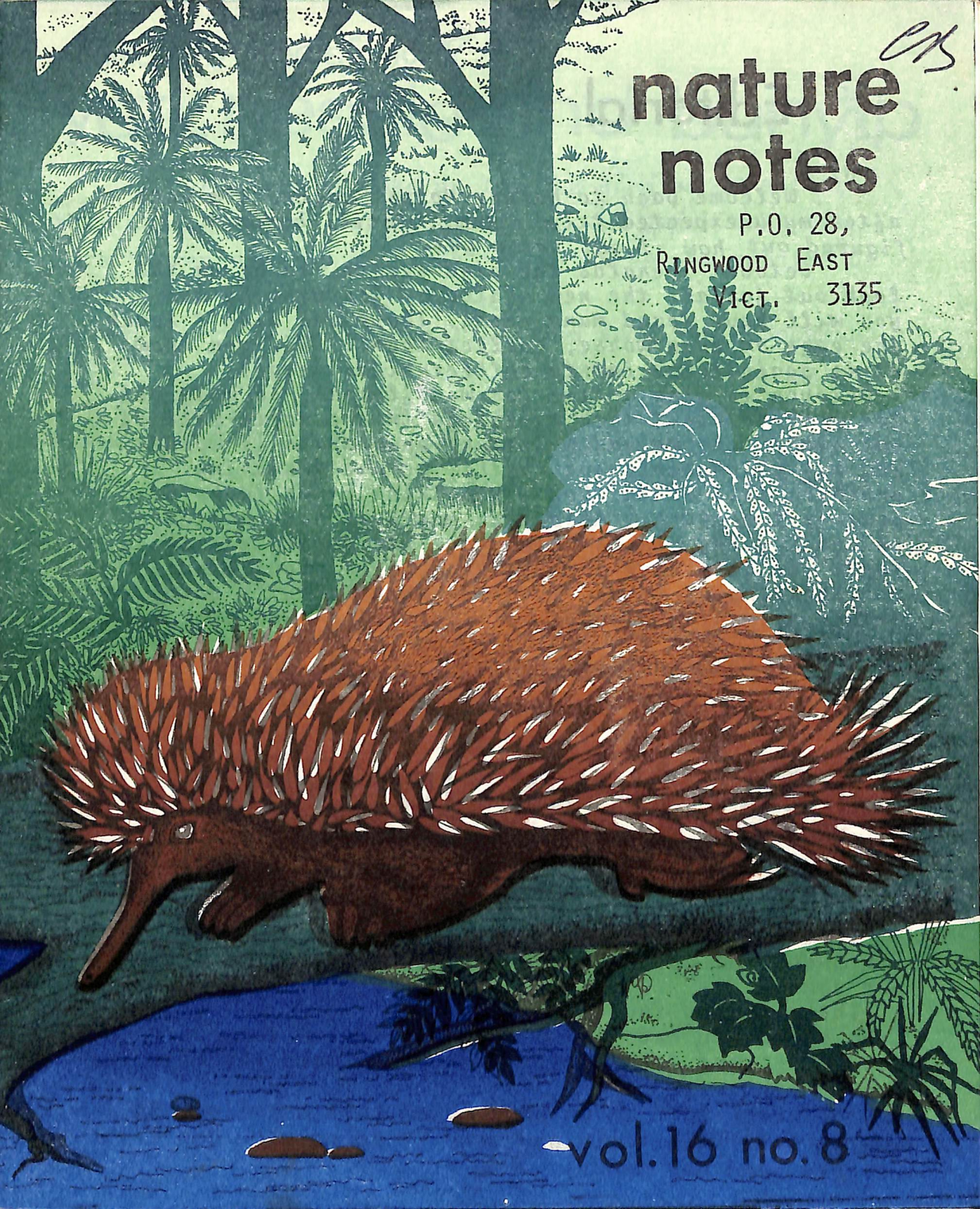


nature notes

P.O. 28,
RINGWOOD EAST
VICT. 3135

vol. 16 no. 8

Editorial

HI !

Welcome back to Nature Notes' again. I'm back after my unexpected trip. Hmm.. Istill haven't figured out how I got there yet.

October heralds the bird season, so be on the look out for all the new arrivals. Isuppose by now you will have found many nests. Ihope you didn't touch the eggs or even worse, collect them.. Did you know it is against the law to collect birds' eggs?

October is also a time for wildflowers, so what better park to visit then Wyperfeld in the north-east of our state. As we had a feature on wombats (I wonder who was responsible for that!), we are featuring echidnas this month. Don't you think Ernie looks handsome on the cover. Also this month we have articles on some of the plants which gave the aborigines their food. We also have some strange tales about birds.

Speaking of birds, I wonder when Wally is going to return from his holidays, it is quiet around here without him.

'Bye for this month,

Peter Bull

EDITOR.

Great News in 1980!

NO, Wally isn't replacing Mr. Bull as Editor! Next year, 1980, both Nature Notes' and Probe will remain the same price as in 1979.

That is; Nature Notes' will cost $2:00 per year for a copy of each edition and Probe will cost $1:00 per year.

These prices include postage.

We hoped you have liked the different covers we have used this year. Next year we hope to make the magazine even brighter.

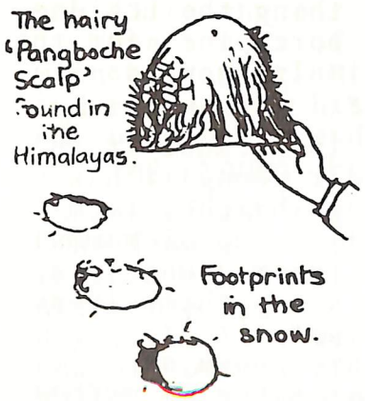
An order form is on page 16 of this magazine. So cut it out, fill it in and send it to us. You don't have to send any money.

Famous "Animals" no. 8

yeti, nessie and bunyip

Perhaps to make up for the species of animals that man has wiped out of existence, it seems that men have "invented" (or are they real?) three new species of wildlife. They are :

* The Yeti



Also called "The Abominable Snowman". Yeti is a name that means 'animal of a rocky place' in the language of the Sherpas - a people who live among the world's highest mountains in Nepal. Strange footprints have been found in the snow and even a large scalp like the top of an ape - but even an expedition led by Sir Edmund Hilary in 1960-61 failed to find any evidence of this strange beast. Can you draw a picture of what you think it would look like?

* Loch Ness Monster


From a photo of 'something' on Loch Ness.

No-one has been able to 'prove' the existence of Scotland's Nessie either - although many people claim to have seen it. Some blurry photos exist but in a lake 700 feet deep there seem to be too many hiding places to be able to get a good look at the mystery of Loch Ness.

* Bunyip

Our very own Australian 'monster' is the Bunyip, which makes booming noises in the river swamps late in the evening. These noises - which terrified some early settlers - really come from the Bittern, a bird that is very hard to see!

The Enigma of the

When the Europeans first came to Australia in the late Eighteenth Century and early Nineteenth Century they found many strange new animals.

However there were some birds that reminded them of home and one little creature.....the spiny ant-eater or to call it by its correct name, the Echidna.

However, the appearance was the only thing the Echidna had in common with the hedgehog and the porcupine, for the Echidna is a member of the family of animals known as MAMMALS. We are members of this family.

Although classed as a mammal, (this is because it is furred, warm-blooded and they suckle their young)it has a very unusual characteristic; its young are hatched from eggs. The Echinda is a member of a small group of mammals known as marsupials. These animals keep their young in a pouch until they are big enough to look after themselves.

What are some other members of this group?

A smaller sub-group of marsupials are known as MONOTRENES. *See if you can find out what makes an animal a "monotrene"* There are only two known members of this group, the Echidna and another Australian, ...the platypus.

It is important to remember that the Echidna is not solely an Australian animal for it is also found in New Guinea.

From available fossil evidence it has been found that monotrenes have only existed in Australia and New Guinea and then only in the last 2 million or so years.

ECHIDNA'S DIET. Over the thousands of years they have existed the echidna's diet has become highly specialized to the point it eats solely ants and termites.

Due to this highly specialized diet, the echidna now has virtually no teeth to speak of.

In the arid areas of Australia, the echidna eats mainly termites. This is thought to be due to the fact that a termite's body has a high water content. Echidnas who live in the wetter climates tend to prefer ants.

ECHIDNA

How does an Echidna find its food?

Well, the echidna generally finds his food by smell. However recent research by the C.S.I.R.O. indicates that the Echidna may actually be able to hear the ants and termites. The scientists have found that the bone structure of the snout of the echidna is conduicive to carrying sound and is connected to the ear.

When a nest of ants is located the echidna forages around with his snout. He collects the ants by rapidly extending and retracting his tongue. The tongue can extend about 15 cm. beyond the end of the snout.

THE YOUNG ECHIDNA. As mentioned earlier, the echidna is one of two egg laying mammals.

The female echidna lays a single egg which is leathery in texture and compressible. *Try to do this to a bird's egg!* After the egg is laid, it is incubated in the pouch for 10 days. The baby echidna then hatches out. It is hairless and of course, spineless. It is almost without hind limbs, while forelimbs are enormous. The tiny baby needs these to climb around the pouch. The female carries the young echidna for 50 days. This is when the spikes begin to appear and grow. However after this time the baby is still fed by the mother who hides him while she goes hunting.

The spines of the echidna are thought to have developed from hairs. *What other animal has a spike/horn that is made of hair?* The spikes grow to about 6 cm. long and are a very efficent form of protection.

When the young echidna is fully matured it leaves its mother to find its own way in the world. This is usually about 3 months after the baby has left the pouch.

PROTECTION. When the echidna is frightened it rolls itself up into a ball, with the spikes pointing out.

Few animals, if any approach this ball as they know from experience that it is painful to touch. The spikes also make it impossible to drag an echidna out of a burrow.

Finally, it should be mentioned that an echidna is an excellent swimmer for they have ofter been seen in the middle of rather large lakes peacefully swimming around.

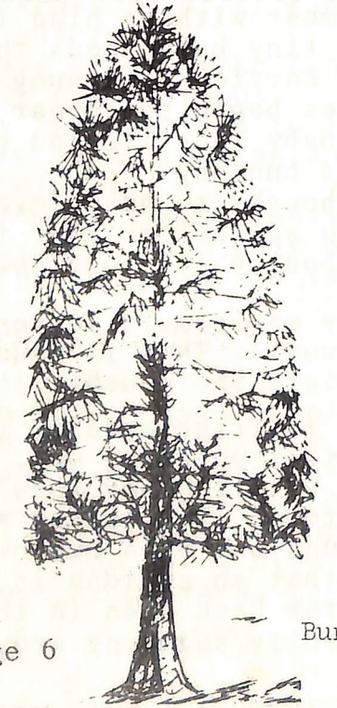
WILD

David Dobson

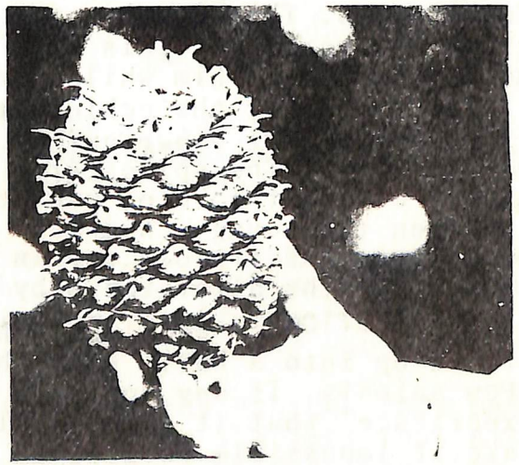
Before the white-man came to Australia, our hiistory books tell us that groups of aborigines moved around catching their food; they were stone age nomads. What our history books don't tell us much about, is the rich variety of vegetable foods that the aborigines used, or the other foods (often unacceptable to us) that were used.

What surprises me, is not that plants were used BUT that ome of the plants had to be processed very carefully to remove poison. The cyads were one example of this. These fern like plants, often called'living fossils' produce seeds up to 3 cm. in diameter. Captain Cook and Sir Joseph Banks were the first white men to have trouble with these seeds. The men who ate them became very sick and 2 of Cook'spigs died. But somehow the aborigines had developed a system of leaching (washing in water) that removed the poison. How did they manage to do this I wonder.

Many grass seeds, and seeds from trees were ground and as a sort of flour and baked. Many of the seeds of the acacias were roasted and eaten whole.



Bunya Pine



FOOD!

The Bunya pine, a tree common in the rain forests of south eastern Queensland, the cones which are like a pine cone, are about the size of a football, and the aborigines came long distances (up to 300km.) to feast on the seeds of the Bunya Pine. Closer to home the aborigines used to roast the seed from the mangrove. The seeds were steamed for a couple of hours on hot stones covered with bark or soil and then washed before eating. Seeds were not the only part of the plant to be eaten, leaves, flowers, roots and bulbs of plants were all eaten.

Behind the mangroves of Western Port Bay grows a plant called seablite (*Suaeda australis*). This plant grows extensively in the salt marsh area and covers large areas. The fleshy tips may be eaten raw or boiled. Many of our ferns have edible fronds in the young stages. The soft tree fern that grows in the Dandenongs has a trunk that was used by the Aborigines.

Early Nancies and milkmaids are wild flowers that still grow in some parts of the Croydon area (*East of Melbourne*) Both are members of the lily family and their bulbs are eaten also.

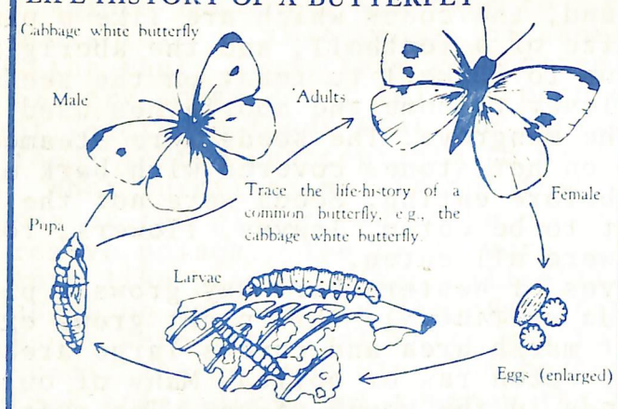
The plants mentioned are only a small part of the plants that aborigines used for food. I haven't mentioned the the shell fish, fungi, animals or insects that were used as food by the early owners of our country. I wonder today how many of us could live off the land as they did.

Various Mangrove seeds.

Nature Notes is a Ringwood Inspectorate Publication.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN OCTOBER

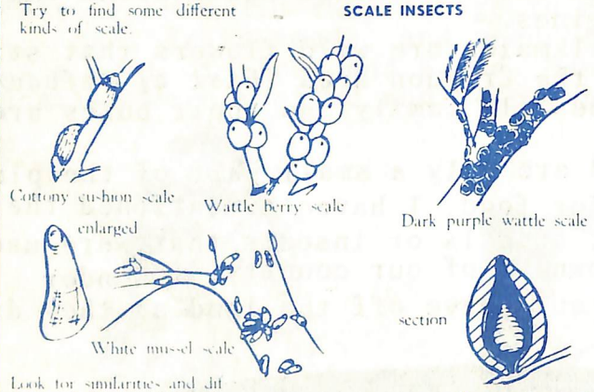
LIFE HISTORY OF A BUTTERFLY



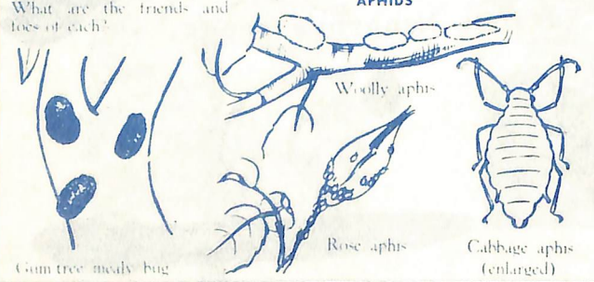
Trace the life-history of a common butterfly, e.g., the cabbage white butterfly.

SCALE INSECTS AND THEIR RELATIVES

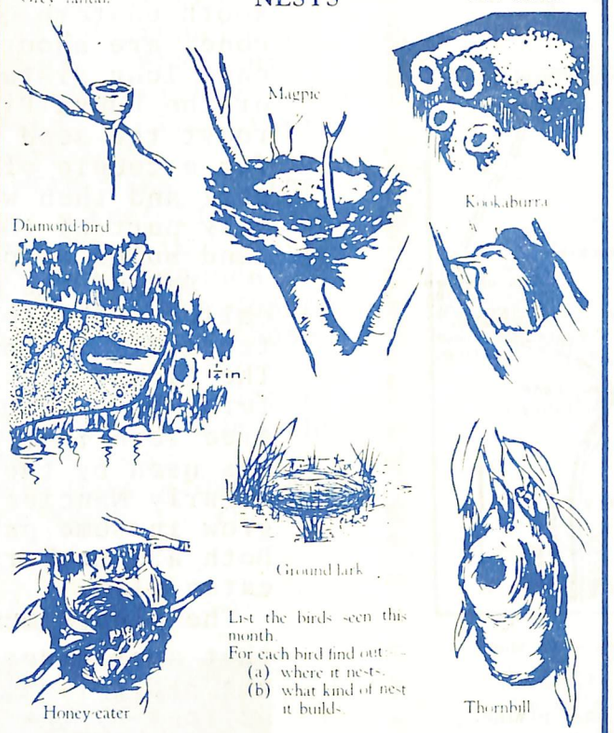
Try to find some different kinds of scale.



Look for similarities and differences between scale insects, mealy bugs, and aphids.
What are the friends and foes of each?

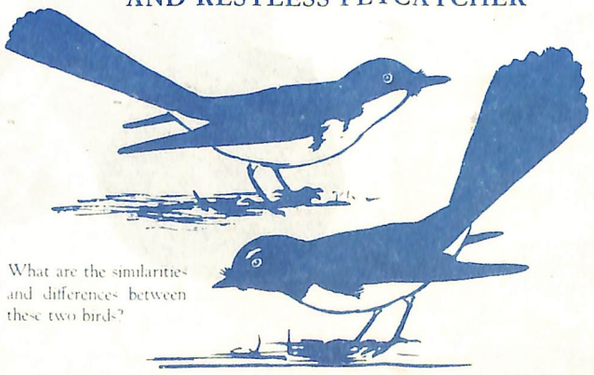


NESTS



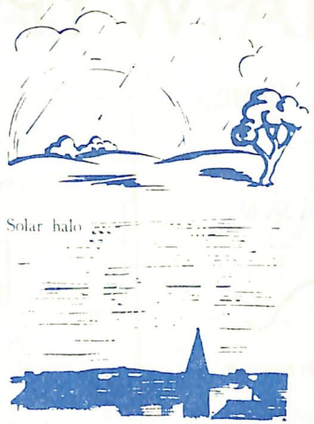
List the birds seen this month.
For each bird find out—
(a) where it nests;
(b) what kind of nest it builds.

BLACK AND WHITE FANTAIL AND RESTLESS FLYCATCHER



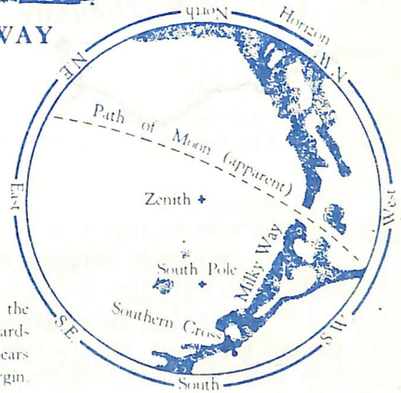
What are the similarities and differences between these two birds?

RAINBOWS AND HALOES



Under what conditions do these occur?
What colours are seen in a rainbow?

THE MILKY WAY



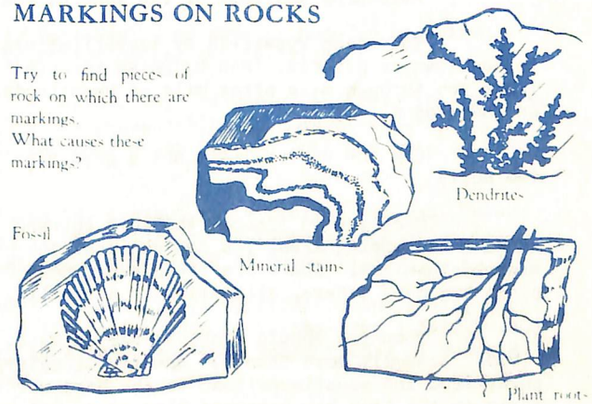
In what part of the sky do you see the Milky Way this month?
Why does it change position?

Oct. 15th
9.15 p.m.

Hold the chart so that the point of the compass towards which you are facing appears nearest to you in the margin.

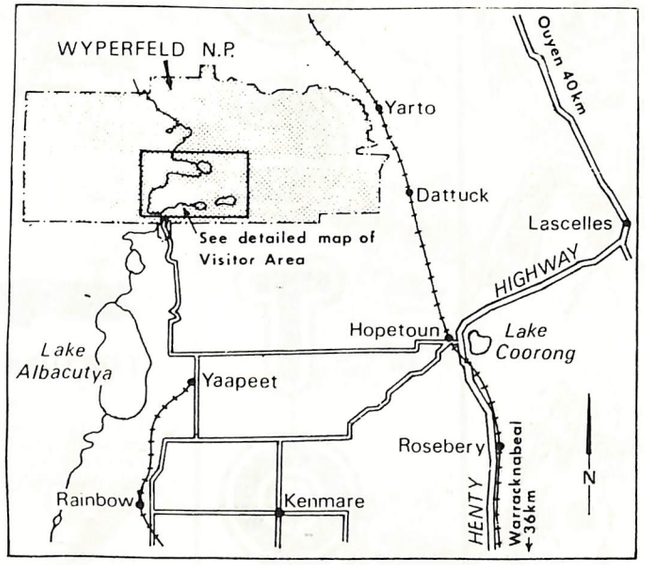
MARKINGS ON ROCKS

Try to find pieces of rock on which there are markings.
What causes these markings?



WYPERFELD

Michael Howes



Wyperfeld National Park - its name comes from a German place name - is the largest in Victoria.

It takes in 100000 hectares of mallee, heathland and river and, lake plains. 100,000 hectares! That's 1000 square kilometres, or in the old measurement an area about 35 miles long and 15 miles wide.

Melbourne and most of its suburbs would fit in the park quite easily.

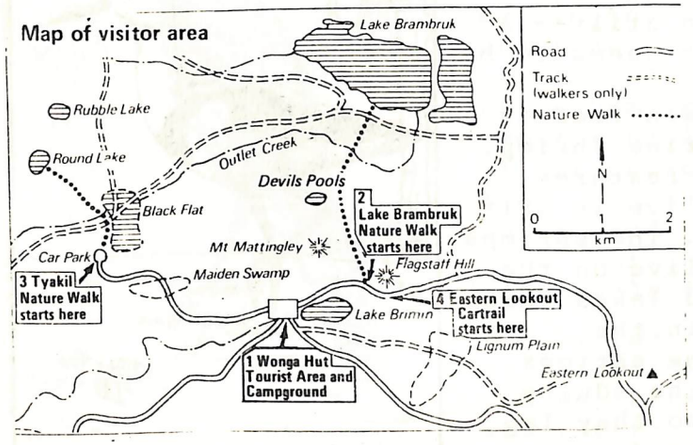
You reach Wyperfeld by travelling via the Calder or Sunraysia Highways to Hopetown or Rainbow, then by going through the small township of Yaapeet. This takes you through mile after mile of wheatlands, brown, green or cream depending on the season.

(By the way ... it's not a good idea to go to Wyperfeld in summer - too hot!)

Once you go through the park entrance gate and down the road towards the Wonga Flat camping area, you can see that the country is quite different from the cleared farmland. There are trees everywhere - river red gums, bulokes, cypress pines and many others, all native to Australia.

Then you should start to see animals, kangaroos, lizards, and dozens of birds. Actually more than 200 species of native birds habe been recorded in the park, from the aquatic pelican to the hard-working mallee fowl, and from the mighty eagle to the tiny black-backed blue wrens and red-capped robins..

NATIONAL PARK



x 1

Fringed Heath Myrtle

(Micromyrtus ciliata)

x 1

Common Aotus

When you arrive at the camping area you select a site among the trees (though not too near a river red gum for they sometimes drop branches) and put up your tent. Then it's probably time for tea.

You won't be able to have a shower at Wyperfeld - there isn't enough water. So you'll just have to have a good wash while you're there, or stay dirty!!

Next day, there's a number of things to do. How about the Eastern Lookout car trail? You can drive round it, or better still, ride your bike (if you've been able to bring it). Or else try the Tyakil or Lake Brambruk nature walks.

Then again, you could just stay in the Wonga Hut area looking at birds and working out what they are. Don't forget to take binoculars and bird books with you.

At night the stars are really fantastic - no smog or haze to hide them - and you can test mum or dad on their knowledge of the constellations!

Of course Wyperfeld has some problems, such as weeds, soil erosion, rabbits and fire. Some helpful people have formed a group called Friends of Wyperfeld (like the friends of the Organ Pipes), and they go up now and then and help pull out weeds such as horehound, thistles and wild oats.

If you're interested in joining in, contact the Victorian National Parks Association (329 5377) but in any case we can all help the rangers look after Wyperfeld by not littering and not disturbing plants and animals.

This time of year is one of the best to visit Wyperfeld. The wildflowers are out in great numbers, and in a year like this, when there has been a fairly good rainfall in the Mallee, the whole park is green. And that means plenty of animals and birdlife.

So ..... hope you can make it!

This 'n' That

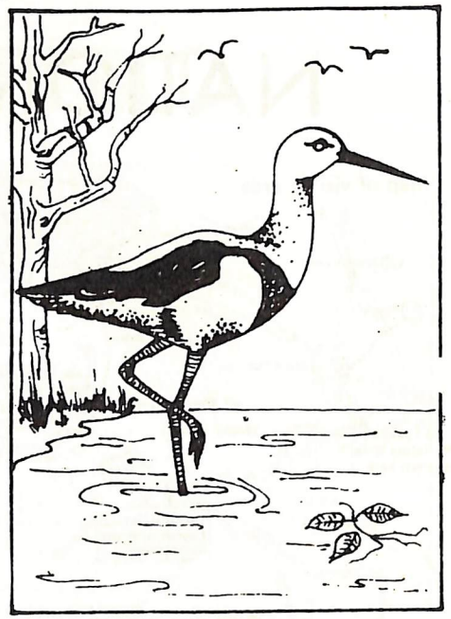
by. L.Delacca.

Most girls and boys will know that in Victoria October is bird month so This 'n That this month will take a look at some 'bird stories'. If you have ever visited Rottnest Island you will have seen huge colonies of the Banded Stilt-- a small wading bird that seems to be all legs and beak.

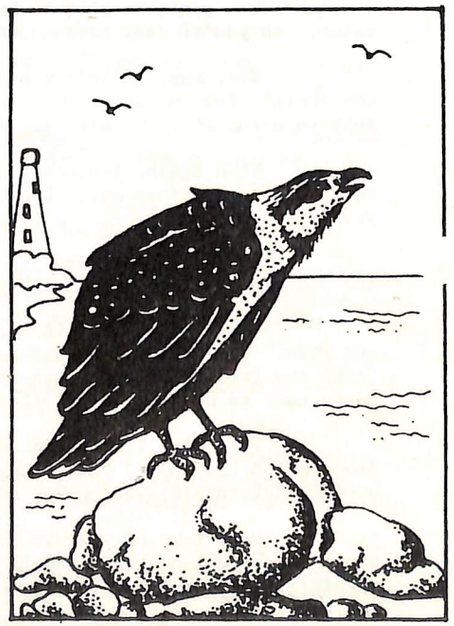
Its main food is the Brine Shrimp, tiny creatures that live in salt water. The shrimps also live on the inland lakes which usually dry right up in the summer. How then do the shrimps survive? They don't. The adults die but before doing so they lay their eggs in the dry mud, where they may lie for many months, until the rains come and out hatches the shrimps to serve once again as food for the Banded Stilt which has now flown inland after spending the summer in more permanent watering spots.

Yes Nature has many wonderful methods of survival. Another interesting bird of Rottnest is the Osprey a not so well known bird of prey. The Interesting thing about the osprey is that he is one of the few hawks to feed on fish. I haven't seen one in action but I believe it is an exciting sight to see one plunge 2 feet first into the sea and then rise with a large fish securely held in its talons. The habitat of this none too plentiful bird is the coastline of all states except ours and Tasmania. So to see him we must travel interstate.

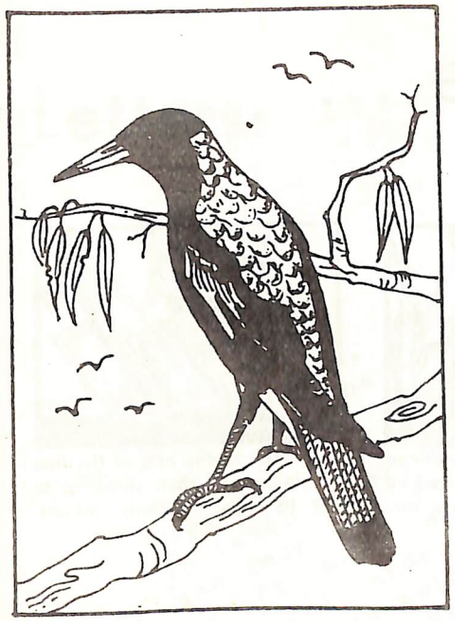
BANDED STILT



OSPREY



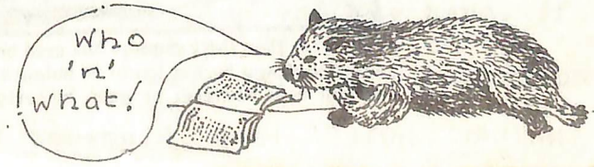
MAGPIE



I have been doing some gardening at home since the better weather has arrived. This has delighted the magpies which are rearing their young in a nearby tree. In my digging I have been uncovering hundreds of white grubs in a semi-circle. Because of this habit we call them 'curl-grubs' although their true identity is the larvae of the cockchafer beetles. They feed upon the roots of grass and shrubs and just love to live under your lawn. Anyway they provided many meals for my magpies.

GALAH GANG GANG

One of the commomest of all Australian birds must surely be the Galah. Wherever you travel you will see flocks of this beautiful bird with its pink breast and silvery-grey back. Because it is so common we probably take its beauty for granted. Do you know that the bird was first described in 1817 when a specimen was sent to the Paris Museum? Early pioneers used the galah as food when they made their 'parrot pies.' However I understand the meat is very tough. Did you know also that until recently galahs were used by gun clubs as targets for the shooters. Horrified bird lovers protested so strongly that the practice has ceased. Yesterday I heard some outrageous shrieking in some gums near home and I knew the galahs cousin the 'Gang Gang Cockatoo' had arrived. See if you can discover the difference.



Legend Time....

There was once a time long, long ago, when kangaroos used to run on four legs instead of only two.

Then one day a kangaroo noticed some black men dancing and he felt he would like to dance too.

So he ran to the end of the line of blacks and then stood up to try to copy all their actions.

The blacks were angry when they first saw him, but he looked so funny they soon began to laugh.

And so they made him keep hopping and dancing on two legs for many hours while the women beat time and the men laughed. And this went on until the kangaroo was too tired to dance any more.

Ever since then the kangaroo has used only two legs when moving about; but now he has learnt to balance with his tail and though he still hops wherever he goes, he certainly does not look funny.

NATURE NOTES' is a Ringwood Inspectorate Publication.

Letters:

8 Holland Road,
Ringwood East
3135

Dear Nature Notes,

I have some information about newts.

NEWTS

Newts are amphibians which can live on land and in fresh water. Newts have long tails to swim and four legs for on land. A newt is also called an eft. Newts are related to salamanders, and like salamanders, many newts are brightly colored Newts are cold blooded animals and hibernate through winter. They breed in Spring, laying eggs singly on water plants in ponds. The eggs hatch to form tadpoles. These develop like the tadpoles of frogs, except that the newt tadpole does not lose its tail. Some newt tadpoles never leave the water, and breed without reaching complete adulthood. Most newts spend most time in water. Like frogs, they can breathe by absorbing oxygen from the water through their skin. But in the summer they usually leave the water to live in moist places on the land. Newts grow to a length of about three inches (8 cm.). The are unusual in that they can grow new legs to replace any that they lose.

Karen Gaylord.

Thank-you Karen for this interesting letter. Your 'Book Award' will arrive shortly.

Don't forget to send to Nature Notes' any interesting bits of information you may have. If we publish it you too will receive a book from us.

NATURE NOTES'
P.O. Box 28
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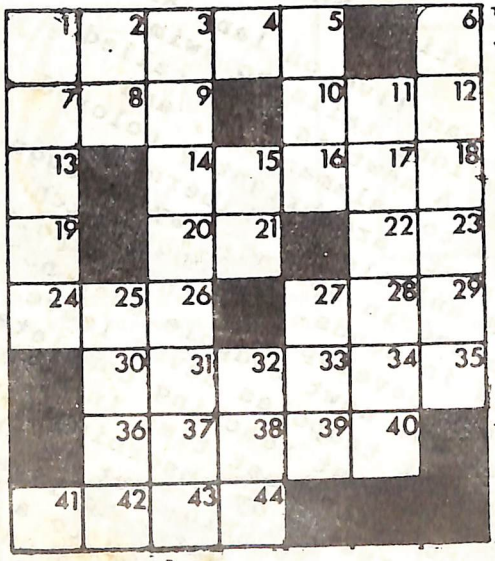
PUZZLEs!



The numbers under each letter tell you which square to put the letter in.

1. Largest Prehistoric bird. 22 32 4 34 27 44 20 29 42 36
2. Next year.. 10 11 12 13
3. Slithery, silent snakes sneak Got the Clue? 14
4. 15th. letter of the alphabet. 7
5. A non-worker bee. 3 23 43 21 29
6. A narrow opening or split in a rock formation. 21 14 41 19 17 2 35
7. A piece forming part of a skeleton. 25 37 30 18
8. 6 24 9 and me.
9. The two of 33 16
10. A prickly shrub with fragrant flower. 5 1 40 26
11. A rodent. 4 31 38

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