

nature notes

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Editorial 1979

Hello there,

Here it is December again! It seems just the other day when I commenced my duties as the Editor of Nature Notes. As I have now finished my studies, this is my last edition as the editor. Over the past year, while I have worked in the production of the magazine I have found it interesting and very rewarding. In compiling the magazine I have learnt many things in Nature and Science as well as making many friends.

Before I go, I would like to thank the many people who have helped me during the year.

Firstly and most importantly, Mrs. Prohasky who has drawn the covers for each edition. As you probably realize, each cover is made up of several drawings not just ONE. Well done Mrs. Prohasky!

I would also like to thank the Ringwood East Mothers' Club. Those loyal ladies who came along the last Monday and the last Thursday of each month to collate and package the printed copies of Nature Notes and Probe so that they could be sent out to the subscribers on time.

I would also like to thank the members of the "Nature Notes' Committee", Mr. Kevin Speer, (District Inspector), Mr. Little (Principal, Ringwood East P. S.), Mrs Saunderson, Mr Delacca. Mr Dobson, Mr Archibald and Mr Propstring for all their help and assistance.

Mr Michael Howes, of the National Parks Service, also needs to be thanked for his help in bringing to you each month a special National Park.

Finally Miss Orme, who was the Assistant Editor, for her help through-out the year and Mrs Gibson for her help in printing the magazine.

Next year, both Nature Notes and Probe will have NEW Editors as Miss Orme is also completing her studies this year.

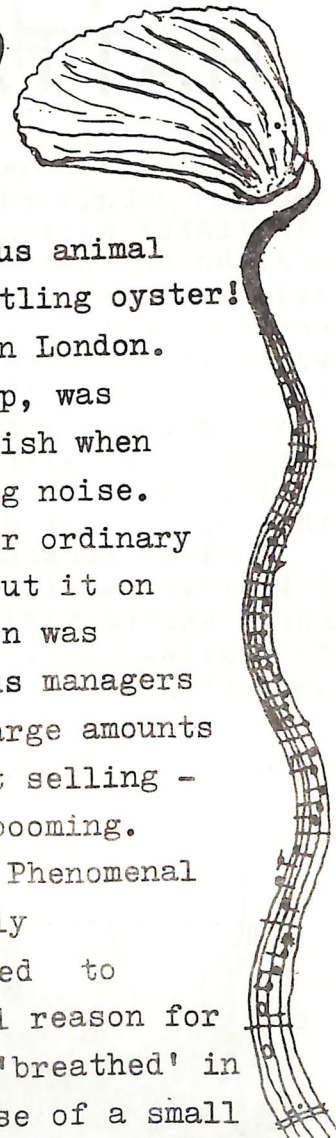
Wishing you a safe and happy holiday,

Col. Bull.

As from the cover, you will notice that our Frind Wally has returned from his holiday. Don't worry, Wally will remain at Nature Notes in 1980, AND he has promised to be a good wombat and help the new editor as much as he can. Ernie said he will keep an eye on Wally and make sure he does behave.

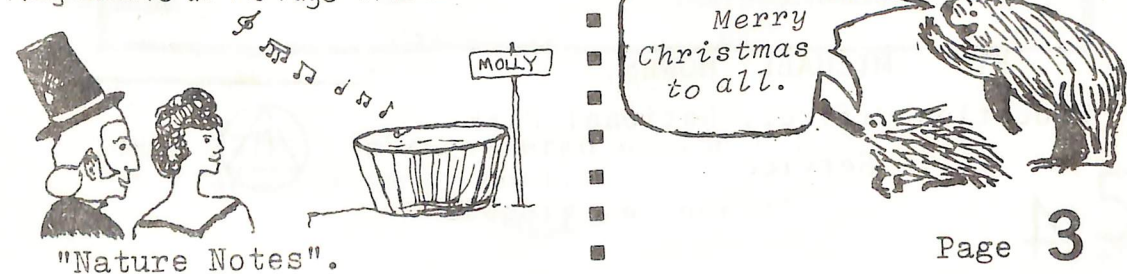
Famous Animals, no.10

MOLLY - THE MARVELLOUS MUSICAL MOLLUSC.



Our famous animal this month is a musical mollusc - a whistling oyster! The year is 1840, the place Drury Lane in London. Mr. Pearkes, the owner of a sea-food shop, was opening a newly delivered cask of hellfish when he heard a curious high-pitched whistling noise. After tracking down the noise to a rather ordinary looking oyster, a surprised Mr. Pearkes put it on display in his shop. Soon half of London was visiting his shop to see Molly, and circus managers and theatre proprietors were offering large amounts of money for her. But Mr. Pearkes wasn't selling - with so many visitors his business was booming. The newspapers printed drawings of 'The Phenomenal Bivalve' and one man suggested that Molly had lost her true love and only whistled to keep up appearances. Of course the real reason for Molly's musical talent was that as she 'breathed' in water, a whistling effect was made because of a small hole in her shell.

Molly became 'all the rage' in London.



"Nature Notes".

HATTAH LAKES



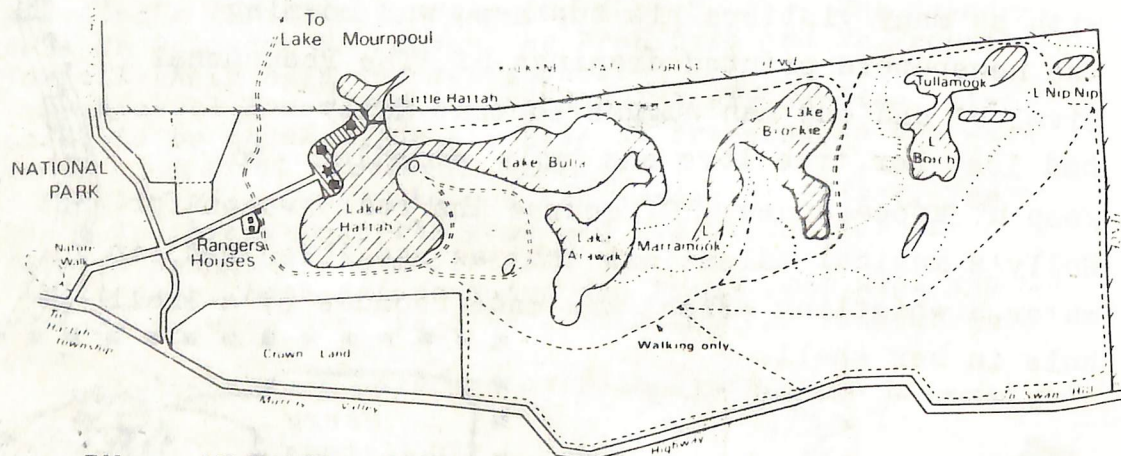
This month I would like to tell you about two National Parks are particularly noted for waterbirds. These are HATTAH LAKES and THE LAKES National Parks.

Although their names sound similar, they are very different areas. Hattah Lakes is in the Mallee, the dry north western part of Victoria. It is just off the Calder Highway, between Ouyen and Mildura.

The lakes themselves- with interesting names like Lake Mournpoul, Lake Brockie, and Lake Nip Nip, as well as Lake Hattah- are filled from the Murray River by a distributary called Chalka Creek. (Distributary.....not tributary, look this up in your dictionary).

Chalka Creek doesn't flow every year, and most of the lakes dry out from time to time, except for Lake Hattah which was partially dammed many years ago to provide water for railway locomotives. But when the lakes are full, they support a great variety of waterbirds.

LAKES SYSTEM OF THE HATTAH LAKES NATIONAL PARK



BY MICHAEL HOWES,
Education Officer, National Parks
Service.



National Park

Have you got your Gould League booklet, *Birds of the Inland Waters* nearby? See if you can find these?

Three kinds of grebe (Little, Great Crested and Hoary-Headed) can be seen, and 4 species of cormorant. Pelicans are regular visitors. Terns, dotterels and Plovers search for food over the shallows. And nine species of duck have been seen.

Altogether, 55 waterbird species have been recorded in the park. It's areal haven for them — no shooting is allowed of course, so Mr. Black Duck (or Mr. Pelican or Mr. Swan) probably says to his wife, "Now there's a nice spot wouldn't that be good for the children?"

And she says, "Well, we could try it, anyway....." The biggest part of Hattah Lakes National Park is Mallee country, and there you find birds like pink cockatcos, ringneck parrots, red backed kingfishers, Gilbert whistlers, Mallee emu-wrens and many more. You will need to check the Gould League booklet, *Birds of the Dry Country* for details.



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The LAKES

NATIONAL PARK

Now the other park, The Lakes National Park, which is found in the Gippsland Lakes. This park takes in a penisular called *Sperm Whale Head* — on a map it looks like a whale — which juts out into Lake Victoria. On the south side of the penisular is Lake Reeve, and then the ninety-Mile Beach and the Southern Ocean..... so as well as inland waterbirds and bush birds there are sea birds too! Among the sea birds to be seen there are Caspian terns, pied oyster-catchers, common sandpipers and greenshanks.

The nearest township to The Lakes National Park is Loch Sport, which you approach from Longford, south of Sale. I should mention that both parks are popular with people for swimming and canoeing as well as for bird-observing.

Well, have I interested you in visiting these parks? I hope so. Don't go to Hattah in the summer holidays though. It can be extremely hot! And where-ever you go — bush, lakes or beach — take your binoculars if possible. Our native birds are so interesting — and they

like to have friends who just want to look at them, NOT shoot them or catch them or take their eggs.

How do I know?

A littl. bird told me!

Michael Howes

Over the year, Nature Notes has brought to your notice a number of National Parks. We hope you have enjoyed reading about these beautiful and interesting places. In the coming holidays, we hope you will visit some of these places.

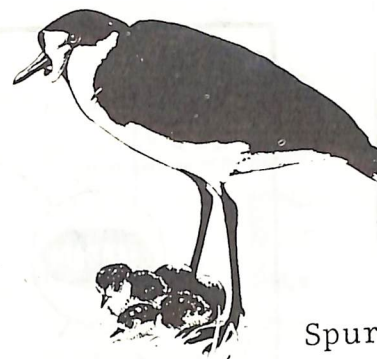
BUT remember, some of them, like Hattah and Wyperfeld are unsuitable to visit in the heat of summer, while others like The Lakes and Cape Schanck are ideal.

Once again I would like to thank Michael Howes for writing this series of articles.

Col. Bull

SPUR WINGED PLOVERS

Ann Gibson



Drawing is from GOULD LEAGUE Booklet, *Birds of Inland Waters*.

Spur-Winged Plover and "nest".

Walking through the carpark at Monash University, a few weeks ago, I heard the angry squawks of two spur-winged plovers. I was suprised to find that they were standing guard over two eggs. There was no real nest- just two dark brown speckled eggs on the earthy corner of a bare garden bed. The parent birds seemed very upset when anyone walked too close and the carpark attendants had roped off nearby car spaces to try and protect them. But when I returned last week eggs and plovers had disappeared.

What had happened to them ? No one knew. Perhaps the eggs had hatched and the parent plovers had moved their young to a safer place. Let us hope that the eggs were not taken by humans or eaten by animals.

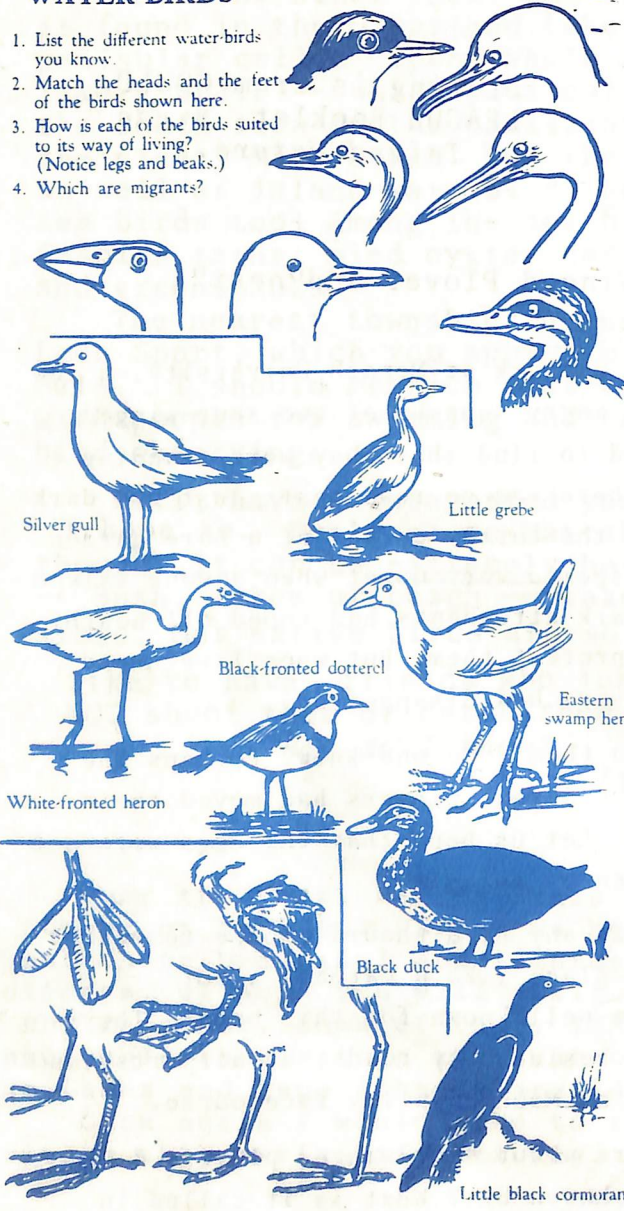
It seems strange that any bird should choose to make a nest for its eggs in a place like a carpark , but spur-winged plovers are well known for this habit. They have been seen to nest beside busy roads, at airports ,on sportsgrounds and even at Moonee Valley racecourse.

Can you find out more about spur-winged plovers ? What other names is it known by ? What is it called in Northern Australia ? What do they feed on ? Have they adapted well to man's settlement of Australia ?

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN:--

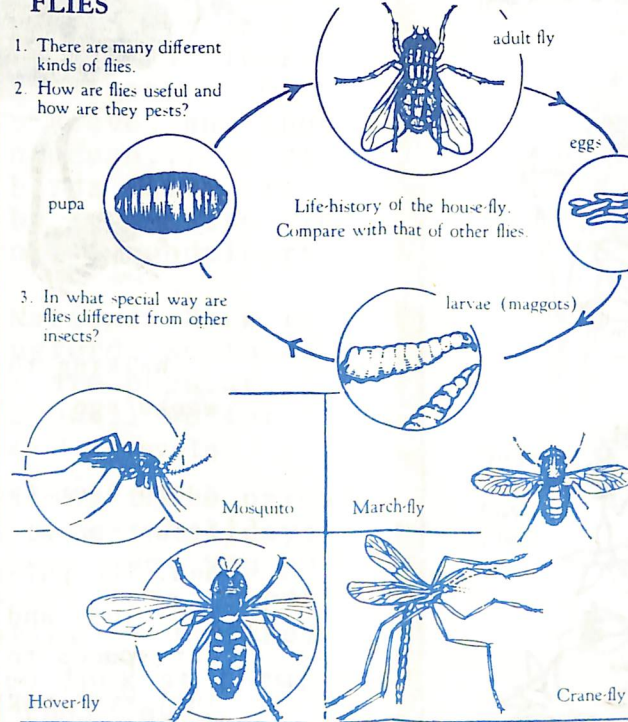
WATER-BIRDS

1. List the different water-birds you know.
2. Match the heads and the feet of the birds shown here.
3. How is each of the birds suited to its way of living? (Notice legs and beaks.)
4. Which are migrants?

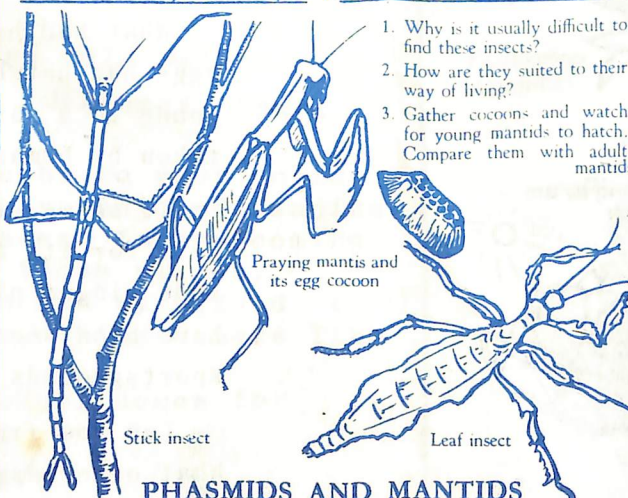


FLIES

1. There are many different kinds of flies.
2. How are flies useful and how are they pests?



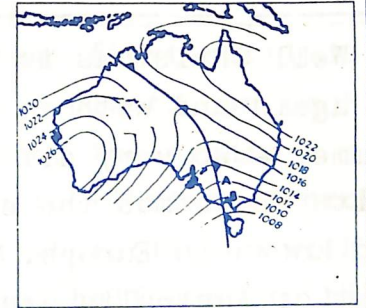
1. Why is it usually difficult to find these insects?
2. How are they suited to their way of living?
3. Gather cocoons and watch for young mantids to hatch. Compare them with adult mantids.



PHASMIDS AND MANTIDS

WEATHER

1. This is a summer weather chart.
2. Draw in the wind direction arrows.
3. Why is the wind warm at A and cool at B?
4. Try to forecast local weather. Compare yours with official forecasts.



WEATHER RECORD

Date	Official forecast	Our own forecast	Weather experienced

SUNSETS

1. What colours stand out most?
2. Why are some sunsets so vivid?



MIRAGES

1. When and where do you see mirages?
2. How are they caused?



DECEMBER

AUSTRALIAN CHRIST

Well Christmas is nearly with us again and with it comes the summer - so very different to the white Christmas the early settlers had known in Europe. Summers in most of Australia are hot and dry and plants that were in flower at Christmas time were eagerly sought after by the colonists to decorate their slab huts or their little bush churches. As a result of this, and because these plants made such a splash of color in the dull green bush during the summer, a number of plants were given the common name of Christmas bush, tree or shrub.

Think back to what these early settlers must have felt with the seasons turned around and summer at Christmas time - the forests of towering eucalypts - thousands of miles from the holly, mistletoe and pines they had used for decoration in their own home countries.

It's interesting that the plants that were given this name are mainly in N.S.W., Tasmania and

CHRIST

Bursaria spinosa
Tasmanian Christmas
Bush or Native Box.



Ceratopetalum gummiferum
NSW Christmas Bush.



MAS TREES by D. Dobson

Christmas
Bells



Victorian
Christmas
Bush.
(Tas.)



Prostanthera
lasianthos

Nuytsia
floribunda.



W.A.
Christmas
Tree.

Victoria- the areas first settled. In N.S.W. there are 3 plants, an orchid, a lily and a shrub. The orchid *Calanthe triplicata* (Christmas orchid) is a lovely soft white flower with large leaves about half a metre high. The second one, a lily, is *Blandifordia nobilis* (Christmas bells), a cluster of grass like leaves with stiff stems carrying the delicate red and yellow bell-shaped flowers. The third one is *Ceratopetalum gummiferum* (NSW Christmas bush) - this is prized because of the brilliant red foliage after flowering.

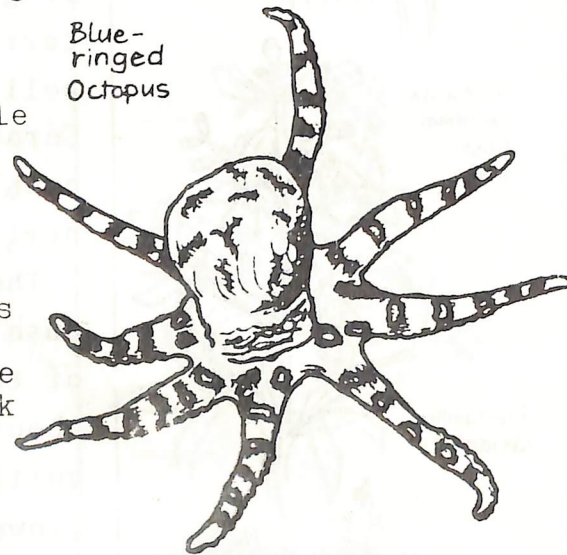
The Victorian and Tasmanian Christmas bush is *Prostanthera lasianthos* - one of the native mint bushes. It grows to about 3m high in the cooler damp forest gullies - a lovely sight to see in full flower with the white flowers standing out. The Christmas tree from W.A., *Nuytsia floribunda*, is very interesting because it is parasitic - its roots attach to those of other plants, from which they obtain most of their food requirements. It grows to about 6m high and is covered by lovely orange flowers around Christmas time.

THIS 'N' THAT ON

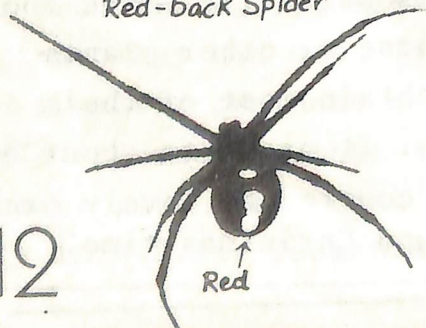
By the time you read this girls and boys, I can imagine that most of your thoughts will be on the holidays just around the corner. Probably many of you will be travelling far and wide - to beaches, mountains, plains and forests. For most people, holidays are a happy time, an exploring time, a finding out time. For some, possibly even you, they can become a sad or painful time. On holidays we are very often in unfamiliar territory and engaging in unusual activities. This is then the time that we need to keep alert to the dangers that may lurk behind that rock, under that log or in that pool. Let us look at some of these:

Nature Notes has often warned you about a pretty little fellow with eight legs - often found in rock pools where people love to explore. Yes, that's right, the BLUE-RINGED OCTOPUS - found right around Australia. This very dangerous mollusc can hold a fascination for children because it is able to change color from dull, dark blue rings on the brownish, yellow body, to bright peacock blue. Under no circumstances should you handle it as a bite produces an immediate numbness which leads to respiratory failure (i.e. you can't breathe) and the need for artificial respiration.

Blue-
ringed
Octopus



Red-back Spider

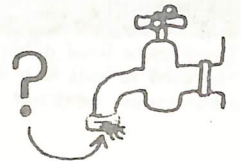


Another nasty and dangerous creature is the red-back spider. Many spiders rely on strong silken webs to catch their prey whilst others have to use venom to subdue their suppers. While Sydney has its fatal funnel-web, Victoria has its red-back.

THE LOOKOUT.

by
L.J. Delacca

Where NOT to look for the red-back: Usually it builds an untidy web in old drain pipes, bags, old iron and wood heaps. While very seldom fatal, the bite can cause agony - particularly in the legs and stomach - followed by much perspiration. The spider is easily recognized by its black, pea-shaped body with the red stripe and long slender legs. Sometimes the red stripe may not be readily visible. If you believe you have found a red-back - call an adult but don't touch. Often on holidays I have seen thirsty children rush to a tank tap, put their mouth over it and turn it on. That is NOT a very wise thing to do. ALWAYS turn the tap on first, as there maybe a red-back, bullant, bee or wasp hiding up the tap - and a bite inside your body can be very nasty indeed.



This chart may help you to know what to do:

ANIMAL	TREATMENT	ANTIVENENE	HOSPITAL?
SNAKES.	• Put a tourniquet around the bitten limb. • Rest limb - get patient to hospital quickly - but without panic. • Identify snake if possible.	For most Snakebites.	Yes.
SPIDERS Red Back	No tourniquet needed - rest patient.	Yes.	Yes.
Funnel Web	Tourniquet - don't loosen it.	No.	Yes.
OCTOPUS. (Blue Ringed)	Keep up artificial respiration until you get to a hospital.	No.	Yes.
STONEFISH. STINGRAY.	Bathe in warm water.	Yes. No.	Yes. Yes.
BEEES. WASPS. BULLANTS.	Remove stinging barb without squeezing poison sac. (Use knife edge) Antihistamine cream may be necessary.	No.	Only if you're allergic to the bite.
PLATYPUS.	Pain killers and rest.	No.	No.

(Adapted from 'THE AGE' Nov. 8, 1976)

Before I say goodbye for 1979, I'd like to say just a word for the poor old maggies. Many of them are killed on our roads because they cannot get out of the way of cars quickly enough. You may help to save them by asking Dad to ease up a bit on the right-hand pedal - and you might be saving more than a magpie's life too. Meanwhile, enjoy your holidays girls and boys (if you still can after all these dire warnings) and we look forward to you telling us all about them in 1980.



Legend Time



The Legend of THE BAT
There once lived a lazy fellow who used to hide in a log while other people went out hunting.



But one day while he was hiding, his wife blocked up the ends of the log and left him to starve.



Many days passed before he could escape, and by then he was little more than skin and bone.



But though he was weak and ill, he went to his wife's home and killed her for what she had done.



Then her people angrily attacked him and he had to jump quickly to avoid their spears. But as he jumped his skin flapped loosely on his thin body so that it seemed he had wings instead of arms.



And at last his thin arms really changed into wings and he leapt into the air in the form of a bat. Then he flew swiftly to hide again in the hollow log and there he remains to this very day.

The Bat

NATURE NOTES is a Ringwood Inspectorate Publication.



CICADAS.

Dear Wally,

At the end of Spring, Cicadas come out of the ground. There are more than 200 different kinds of cicadas in Australia alone. Have you ever let a cicada crawl across your hand? Have you ever heard a cicada singing on a hot day?

Did you know that you can make the sound of a cicada by pushing in and out the bottom of an old tin can.

from Julie Sutcliffe.

Editor's Note.

Around December each year many children find clinging to trees the outer shells of Cicadas. Why do the cicadas shed their shells? What other animals shed their shells or skins?

Julie mentioned "an old tin can". Is what we call a tin can really made from tin? What is it really made from? How did it get the name tin?

As this is the last Nature Notes for 1979, I thought I would list some of the people who contributed letters and did not have them printed.

Jenni Purves, Rachel Wigley, Kylie Leigh, Steven Chettle, Lynne Dunham, Lynda Pascoe, Nicci and Jaimie Booth, Donna Spoor, Fiona Sutherland, Lara Hoffman, Jordana Radojkovic.

As well as others who sent us things AND forgot to put their names on their work.

Over the holidays many of you will visit many exciting places and see many interesting things. Don't forget to write to us about these places so that other children around Australia can find out about these places.



REGISTERED CATEGORY B

PERIODICAL