

NATURE

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No. 2



NOTES

Editorial

Autumn is here and many families make the journey to Bright in the north-east of Victoria to view the beautiful displays made by the many trees whose leaves are changing color and falling to the ground. This creates much work for the people living in the area. The birds are grateful for the leaf mulch created as it provides good insect breeding grounds.

Mushrooming is quite a popular pastime on the sunny days following rainy ones. This is when the mushrooms push their heads through the ground's surface and face the world. Be careful you pick the right ones, as some toadstools are poisonous and can make you violently ill.

Spiders are plentiful at this time and some unusual ones can be seen by those who watch their gardens carefully. In paddocks you can see the long thin threads of spiders.

The Wally Award for the letter of the month goes to Fiona Sutherland of Nunawading. Fiona will receive her Perriwinkle book soon. Well done Fiona! Her article on swans is on page 12.

This month is also good for studying birds. Note the beak in particular. Is the bird feeding? If so, on what? Drop a line and let us know what you find out.

R. Hall

Editor.

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"Nature Notes",
P.O. Box 28,
Ringwood East, 3135.

SNAILS

Everyone is familiar with the common garden snail. But how much do you really know about it? Did you know that the snail is a mollusc? What other members of the mollusc family are not snails? Snails often appear after rain or at night when the dew is on the grass.

A snail has no teeth but instead has a coarse tongue called a radula. It uses this for tearing off pieces of leaves it feeds on. A snail has no nose. It has no bones, and its soft body is protected by a shell. A slippery liquid helps to protect the snail's foot as it moves over sharp objects; and aids it in moving along.

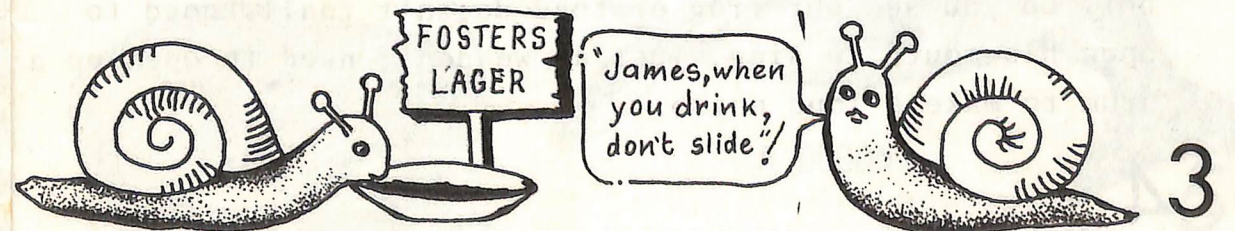
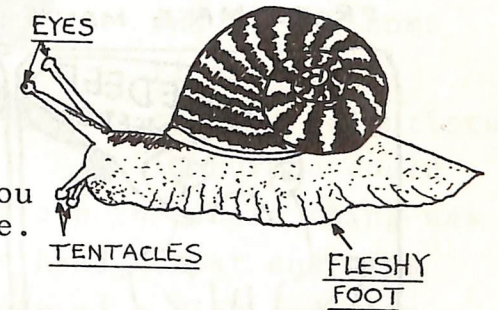
See if you can find a snail. What do you notice about its location? Use three words which each tell something different about where you found the snail.

A snail does not breathe through its mouth! Its breathing is done via another hole. If you look carefully you will find quite a large breathing hole. Watch it open and close as the snail breathes.

Put the snail on a piece of clear glass or a window you have wiped with a moist sponge. From underneath the snail, carefully look at the snail's foot as it moves. What do you notice? These waves are made by the muscles in the snail's foot and enable the snail to glide along surfaces.

Snails often seal the bottom of their shells off while they are waiting for moister conditions to occur. Why?

They are often a pest in the vegetable garden in particular. Snail bait is sometimes dangerous, for pets or young children can easily mistakenly eat it. Did you know that snails love beer? A snail trap can be made using beer as the bait!



CROAK! Oh dear, I think I've got a frog in my throat!

THIS

Have you ever tried singing with your mouth shut? Rather difficult I would think, but there is one group of animals that can manage this and they are the AMPHIBIANS - frogs, toads and salamanders. Amphibians are animals that spend at least part of their lives in water and part on land.

Have you ever listened to a chorus of frogs? the loud bellow of the bullfrog, the high chirp of the cricket frog or the groans, whistles, snores, barks, clicks, wheezes and grunts of the rest of the choir.

FROGS MAKE MANY DIFFERENT NOISES.....

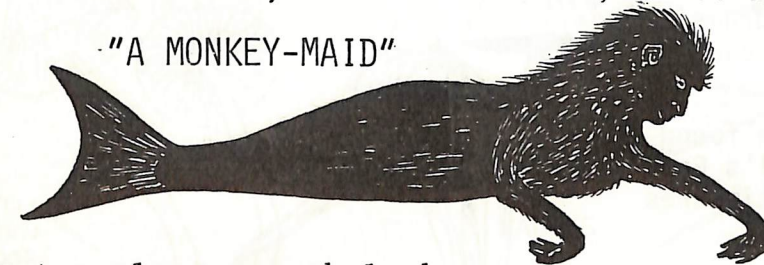


Most of them make their sounds when air is passed back and forth from the mouth to the lungs. As it does so the air vibrates vocal chords in the throat. This causes the throat to swell up like a balloon and act as an echo chamber to magnify the sound. The echo chamber serves as a sounding box. So you see our frog or toad doesn't really need to open his mouth to sing, just as we don't need to open up a drum to make a loud noise.

n THAT

Sailors of the 18th. and 19th. centuries loved to tell tales of the beautiful mermaids they had seen whilst travelling in far off lands. Clever Chinese salesmen realized that this was a great chance for making a quick profit - if they could sell mummified mermaids to the European sailors. That is just what they did - and this is a picture of one of them. (A baby mermaid of course, because the fully grown ones "were very hard to catch.") These mermaids fetched

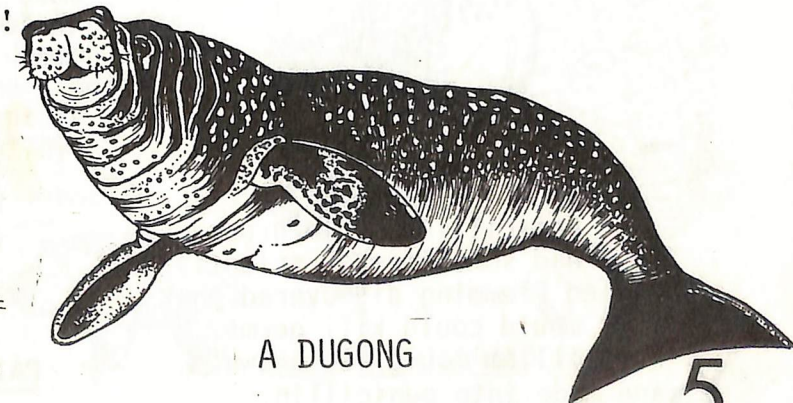
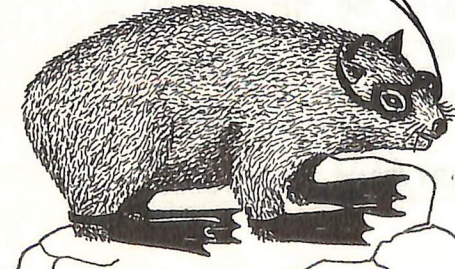
"A MONKEY-MAID"



very high prices and it was some time before curious scientists in Europe could

get a close enough look at one to prove the whole thing was a hoax. They showed that a monkey's head, chest and arms had been skilfully sewn onto the body of a fish and then dried and preserved with herbs! Actually, it was probably the Dugong which started the mermaid myth, as this mammal sits up in a way not unlike mermaid on a rock- well, to a drunken sailor that is!

"If you can't catch them.... Join them."



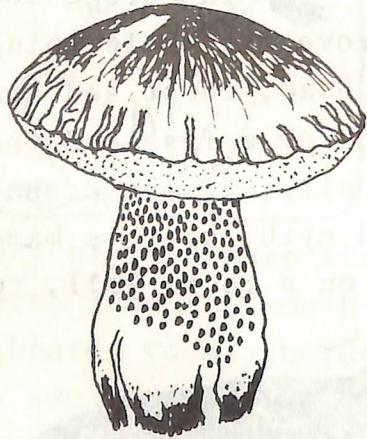
A DUGONG

What To Look For In

Here are some common fungi which can be found in the Ring-area. This is not the only month we find fungi but they seem to be more plentiful during the next few months.

In recent years Ringwood people have found some giant fungi. Some of these have been measured and have been over 55 centimetres across while weighing kilograms! They have pores instead of gills.

There were some found years ago, at Hall's Gap, which were 90 centimetres across!



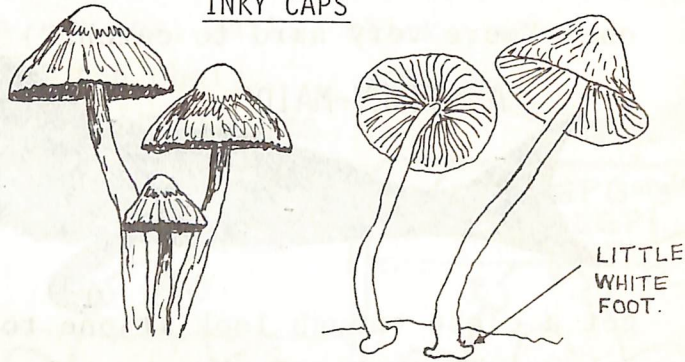
BOLETUS

Penicillium mould grows on bread sometimes. A scientist, called Flemming discovered that this mould could kill germs. Penicillium mould is 'grown' and made into penicillin.

Pixie Parasol (MYCENE INTERRUPTA) is a small blue toadstool, about 12 mm.

If you pick Inky Caps (COPRINUS SPP.) and leave them for a few days you will soon know why they are called this. Don't leave them where the inky fluid will stain things.

INKY CAPS



PIXIE PARASOL

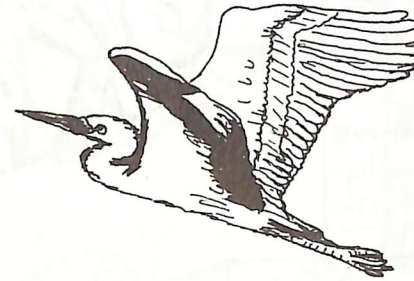
The Fairy Ring Toadstools are quite common in some areas. If you can find a ring one year watch it grow bigger over a few more years. Sometimes the grass inside the circle is greener than the grass outside.



FAIRY RING TOADSTOOLS

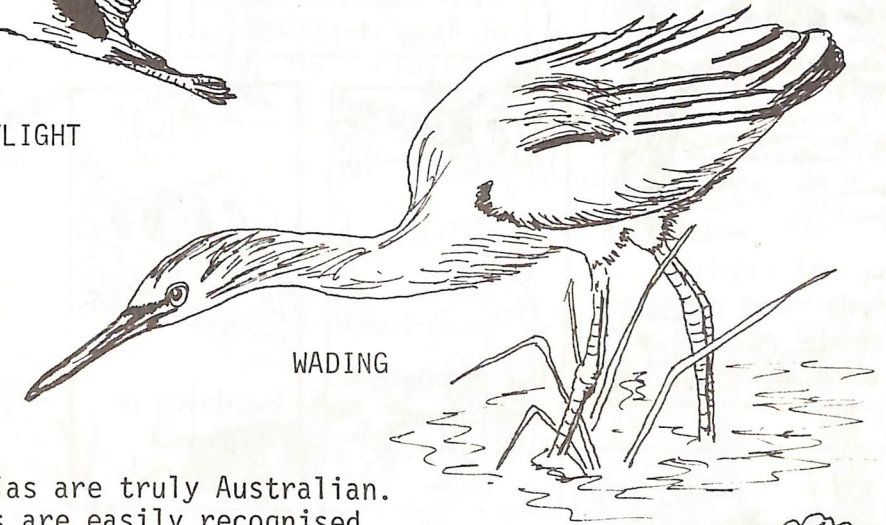
APRIL

THE WHITE-FACED HERON:



IN FLIGHT

The white-faced heron is often seen along the road-side or on shallow water-logged areas. It feeds on frogs and lizards. It has wrongly been called the "blue crane". The true crane in Australia is the Brolga.



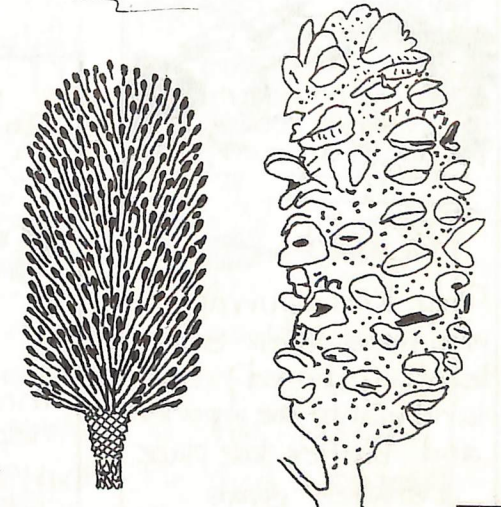
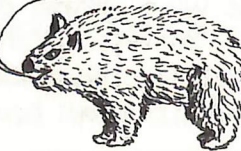
WADING

Banksias are truly Australian. The flowers are easily recognised because they are massed together and form a long dense spike. When the flower dies it is followed by knobby seedpods.

Did you know that Banksias were named in honour of Joseph Banks, the botanist(a person who studies plants), who came with Captain Cook to Australia in April, 1770?



A TOAD STOOL!



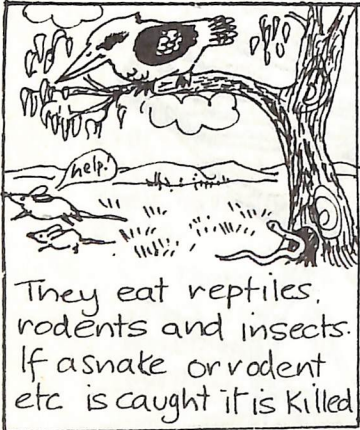
BANKSIA INTEGRIFOLIA



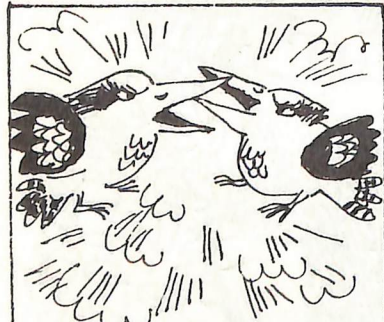
Kookaburras grow to about 43 cm. long and are



the largest members of the kingfisher family - but they don't like fish



They eat reptiles, rodents and insects. If a snake or rodent etc is caught it is killed



Only Kookaburras who have their own territory breed, so land rights are important and battles take place between rivals.



Those who miss out help bring up the young of the luckier Kookaburras

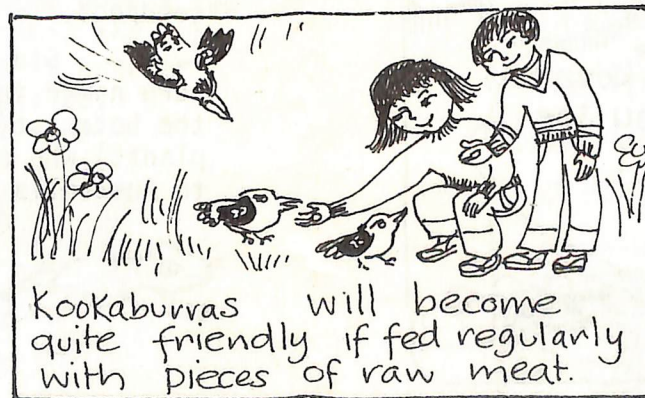
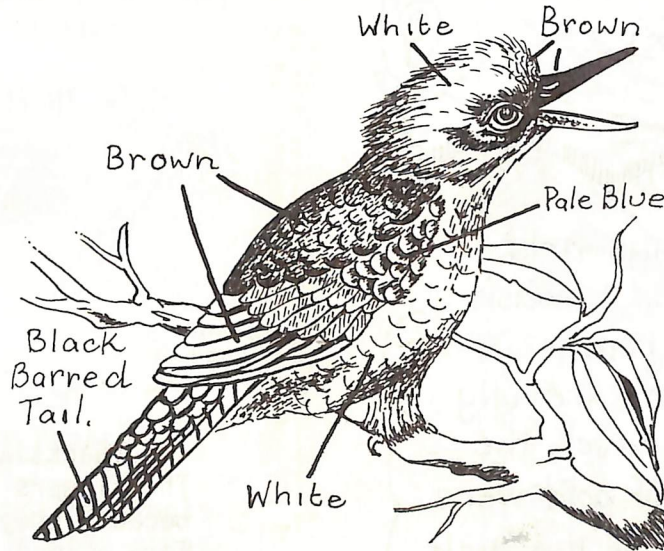


by repeated dropping from a tree - or



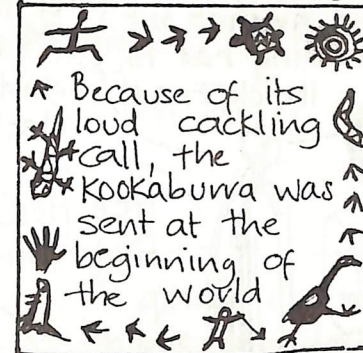
beating it against a branch.

KOOKABURRAS

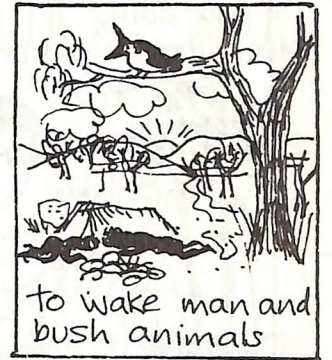


Kookaburras will become quite friendly if fed regularly with pieces of raw meat.

According to Aboriginal legend -

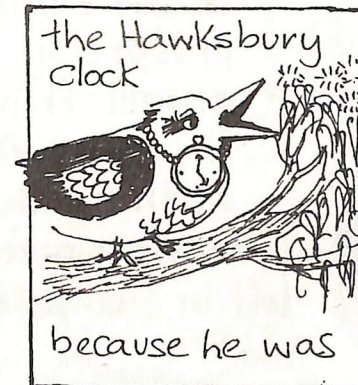


Because of its loud cackling call, the Kookaburra was sent at the beginning of the world



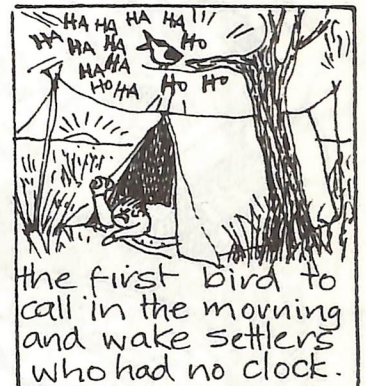
to wake man and bush animals

When white man came to Australia he called the kookaburra ----



the Hawksbury clock

because he was



the first bird to call in the morning and wake settlers who had no clock.



Can you find out about what the different calls of the Kookaburra mean? He has a laugh, a cackle, a chuckle and a squawk and they all mean something special.

WONDEROO

-visits the Golden Gully Junior Prospectors Club near Bendigo.

What are you doing Joe?

I'm making a gold nugget out of welding rod to trick Fred!

Fred and Tess are members of the gold panning club. Mr. Smith is the teacher and leader, Joe is the elected junior leader

Hee Hee! just wait till Fred finds this in his dish!



I don't like this

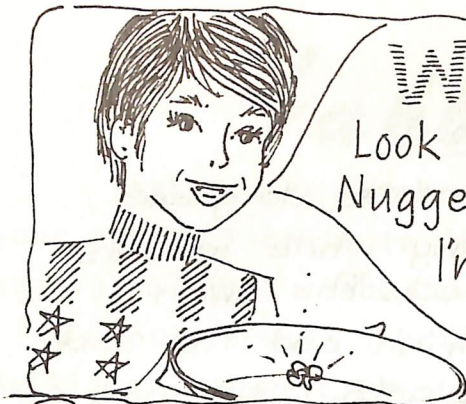
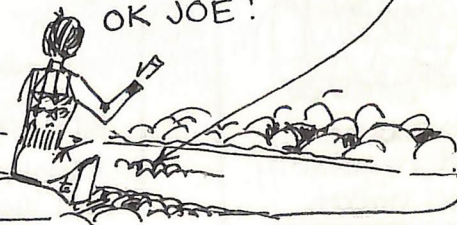


In the early days gold prospectors used to wash gravel from streams in tin pans. After carefully washing the gravel, the heavier pieces of gold were left in the bottom of the dish.

The brass "nugget" covered with clay planted by Joe
Next day...

This is a good spot for you to pan Fred. I'll go down a bit further...

OK JOE!



Wow!!
Look at that Nugget! I'm Rich!
I'm Rich!

Soon after Fred discovers the "gold", Wonderoo hops over and looks closely at the "nugget" and frowns...

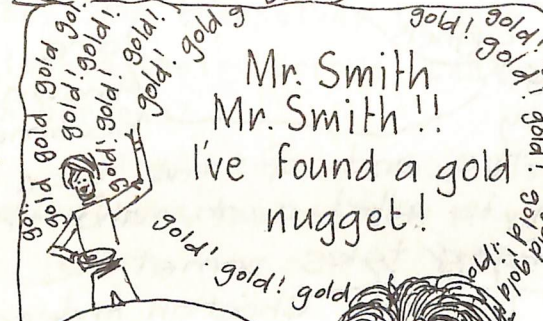


Hmmm!

A quick examination soon shows Wonderoo the nugget is a fake, so he quickly exchanges it for a real nugget he found some time before...

Just as we thought!!

That serves you right Joe!



Mr. Smith
Mr. Smith!!
I've found a gold nugget!

Tee Hee!
Now we'll get a laugh.

We'll see about that!



You're right Fred it is pure gold! Come on boys have a look!



Oh No!
Why didn't I pan there!

tee hee

The Swan.

The swan is closely related to geese and ducks. It has snowy white feathers and a long graceful neck. The swan feeds on worms, shellfish and the seeds and roots of water plants. Their neck is very useful for searching for food. They can fly 40 to 50 mph (64 to 80 kph). When they fly in the air they make a very loud and wide range of whistling sounds. The female lays five to seven white eggs in June. The young, called cygnets, are covered with grayish down at first. They become snow-white by the end of the year. The male swan is called a cob, and the female a pen. Fairy tales sometimes the swan, as in Hans Christian Anderson's "The Wild Swans." There are seven different species which are in various parts of the world.

Fiona Sutherland

Ten out of ten
for your writing and
drawing!



Yabbies.

Yabbies are members of the crayfish family. Use your school library to find out the meaning of the aboriginal word "yabby"; your librarian may help you.

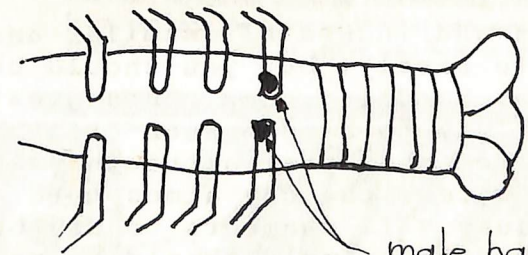
There are 90 species (types) of yabbies in Australia! We have the largest and the smallest freshwater crayfish in the world.

Many farmers know the yabby because of the great damage they can cause to irrigation channels and dams.

They are also gaining popularity in restaurants. Some yabby farms have sprung up to meet this demand.

The remarkable yabby is able to survive even through long periods of drought. It is thought that they seal themselves in deep water-filled chambers, with-in their burrows. Can you think why else they live in burrows?

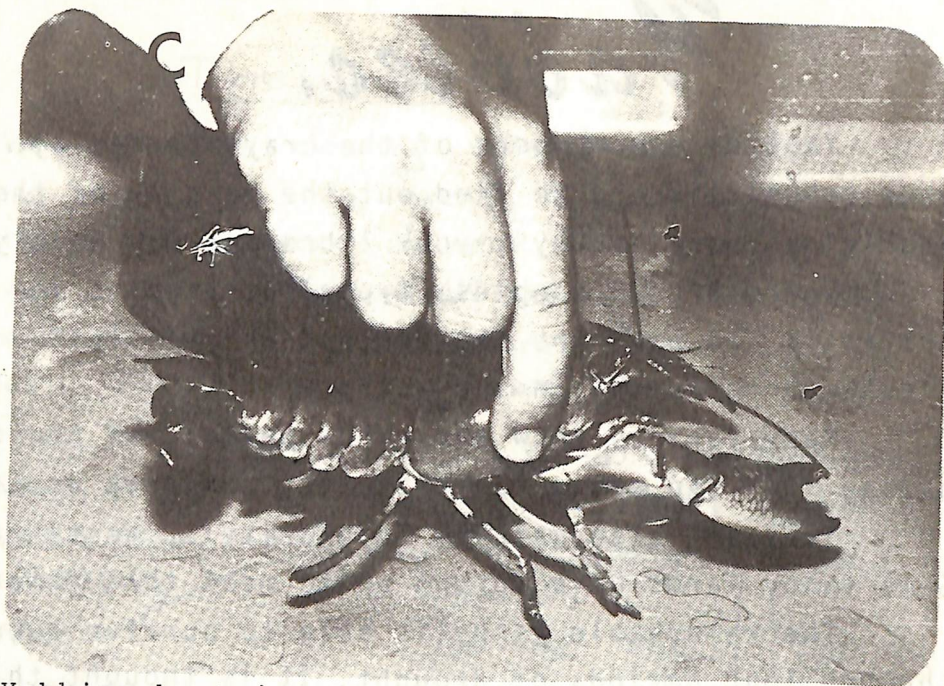
If you turn a yabby upside down as the drawing below shows you can see if you have a male or female.



male has "bumps,"
female doesn't.

Turn to the next page and discover some more about yabbies. The information there comes from a series by George Warren of Burwood State College, which tell how to various animals in the classroom or at home.

Yabbies.

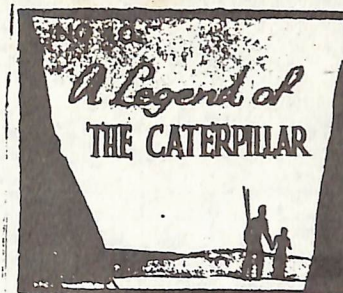


Yabbies kept in the classroom can be a valuable addition to your class'nature corner. Yabbies are active during spring, summer and autumn so there really is a great opportunity to go out and collect them, with your teacher's help or your parent's assistance. Useful items for a 'yabby hunt' are: a piece of string or cotton with a lump of meat attached and a small net. Why is the net important?

Yabbies and indeed all similar animals can be picked up quite easily, but you should be wary about careless handling. Can you suggest why? What is the correct way to handle such creatures? It is important to remember that although yabbies can survive out of water, the dry atmosphere of the classroom will cause gill chambers to dry out reasonably quickly. The animals should be returned to the water every 5 or 10 minutes for at least a short period.

Yabbies can be kept in an ordinary glass aquarium with a lid to keep out the dust. An air pump and filter may be necessary. Food should include meat (perhaps earthworms) and vegetable matter-raw carrot etc. Feeding need only be done 2-3 times a week.

Legend Time.



A long time ago a man and his son found themselves without food while on a long journey.



So the anxious father built a little hut for his sick son and hurried away to hunt for food.



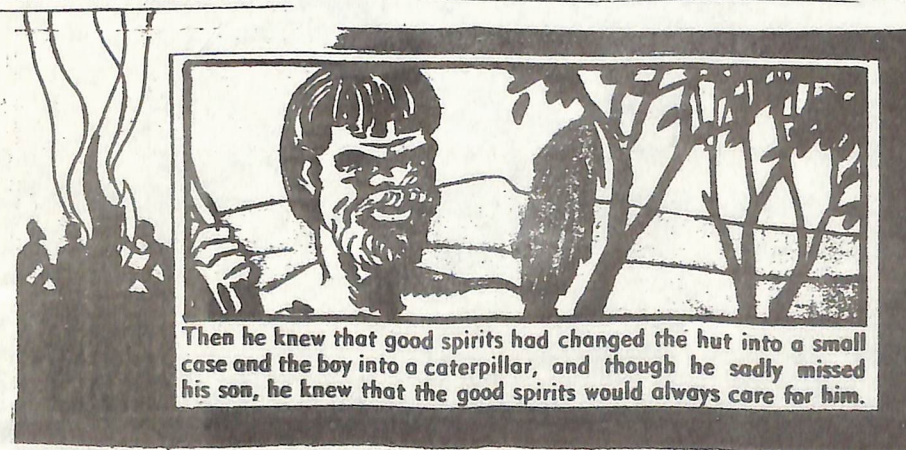
Then the boy became ill and it seemed he would soon die unless he were given something to eat.



But several days passed before he found any, and as he ran back he feared his son would be dead.



His fears increased when he reached the place where his son had been, for both the boy and the hut were now gone; but he saw in a tree a curious case of sticks and bark in which was a caterpillar.



Then he knew that good spirits had changed the hut into a small case and the boy into a caterpillar, and though he sadly missed his son, he knew that the good spirits would always care for him.

LORRY THE LAUGHING KOOKABURRA'S CROSS-BACKWARDS-WORDS.



YOU SHOULD
GET A GIGGLE
OUT OF THIS!

S	A	D	U	S	S	B	G	G	D	K	S	G	N
H	I	R	R	M	I	A	R	E	R	N	A	O	H
S	L	L	R	I	N	L	C	O	A	A	I	N	A
U	R	O	V	G	B	A	V	I	S	S	S	S	L
R	W	A	G	E	F	E	L	E	Y	E	W	S	A
H	S	A	A	E	R	N	L	M	R	A	L	T	G
T	N	D	T	P	O	G	I	T	L	E	I	L	F
G	A	I	E	R	H	N	U	L	T	U	Y	R	A
O	H	U	E	E	E	I	O	L	R	A	O	E	N
W	G	H	O	R	S	W	S	F	L	G	W	H	A
B	U	T	C	H	E	R	B	I	R	D	I	K	W
R	E	N	I	M	L	L	E	B	C	R	A	B	S

**** Directions:** The birds and food listed below are written fowards, backwards, diagonally and vertically in the puzzle above. Put a line through each one as you discover it.

SILVER GULL THRUSH GANG-GANG NOISY MINER GALAH
 ROSELLA BELL MINER WATTLEBIRD SWALLOW SWAN
 BUTCHERBIRD WHITE-FACED/ HERON (SEPARATED) SILVER-EYE
 GRASS FRUIT APHIS SEEDS WORMS SNAIL
 CRAB FROG

You should have 19 letters not used.

Use these to make a bird's name(3 words:1-8-10)