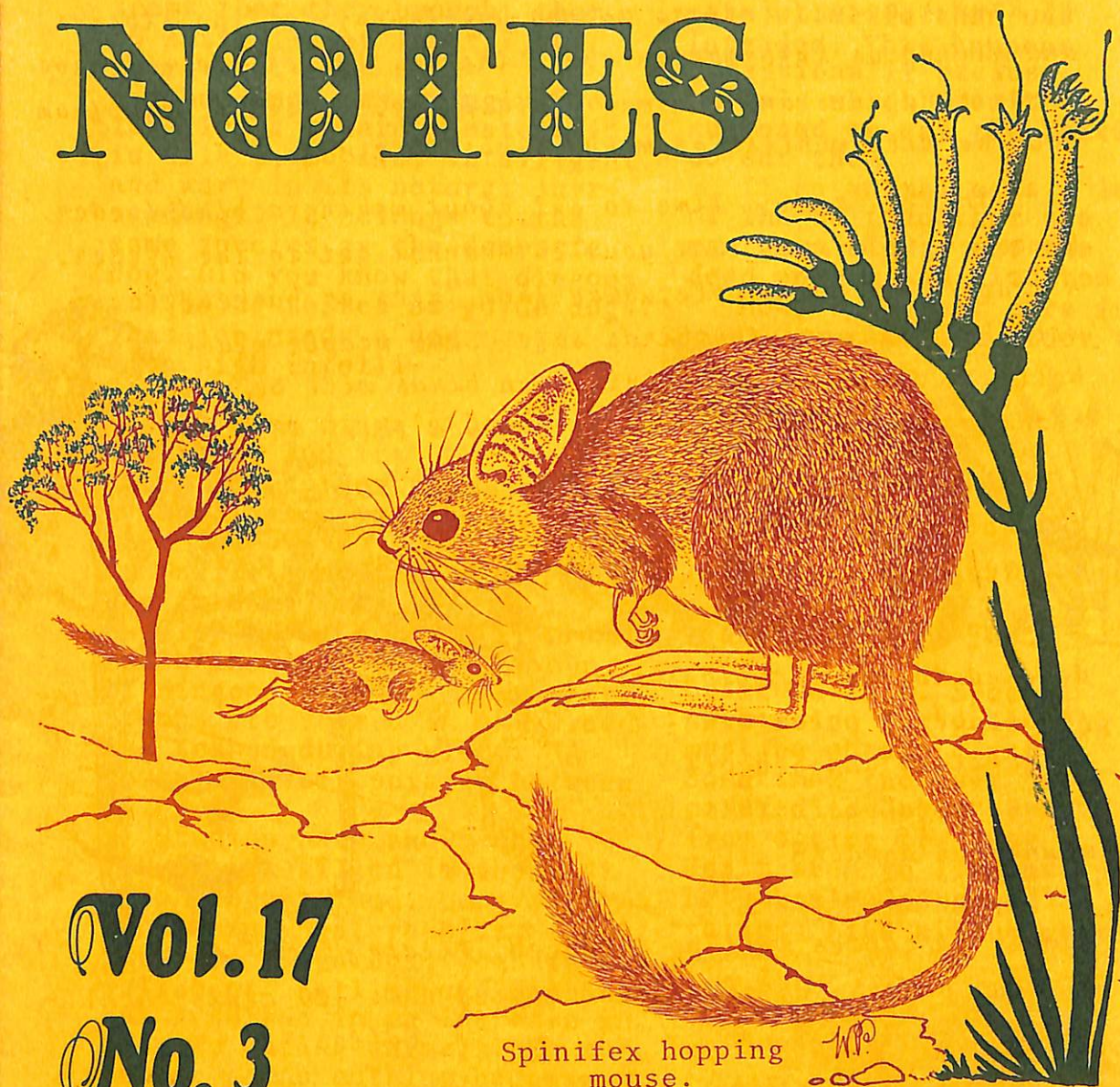


NATURE NOTES



Spinifex hopping
mouse.

Vol. 17
No. 3

NATURE NOTES ...Registered G.P.O. Category B.

Editorial

With the May holidays not far off some of you might be lucky enough to be vacationing elsewhere. This month we have received letters asking questions, telling stories and giving us information about things. Letters do not have to be long ones and you may win a prize, so let's hear from you! We will publish as many as possible.

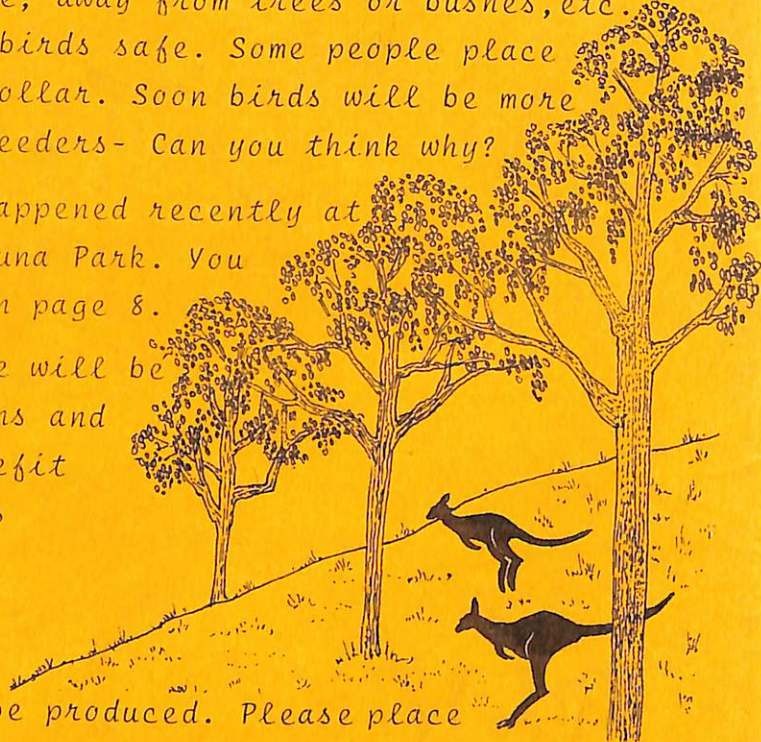
This is a good time to set about making a bird-feeder. Remember to ensure that your cat cannot get to the feeder. A tray on top of a pole, away from trees or bushes, etc. will help to keep the birds safe. Some people place bells on their cats' collar. Soon birds will be more readily attracted to feeders- Can you think why?

Quite a lot has happened recently at the Colin Mc Kenzie Fauna Park. You can read about these on page 8.

Next month's issue will be devoted to the Grampians and should be of great benefit to families and schools planning to visit this wonderful area. An extra, but limited number of copies will be produced. Please place your orders for additional copies now. (20 cents each)

Editor,

Russell Hall.



WARRIGAL

Warrigal is a town in Victoria. This is what the aborigines called the dingo. It seems that they brought them to Australia at least 7,000 years ago.

The dingo has wrongly been labelled a coward. Instead it is alert, mobile, intelligent and wary in its natural surroundings. It belongs to the same species as the domestic dog. Did you know that dingoes are being tested as guide dogs? This job needs a dog with high intelligence.

The true dingo's head is broader and its teeth are larger than a domestic dog of the same size.

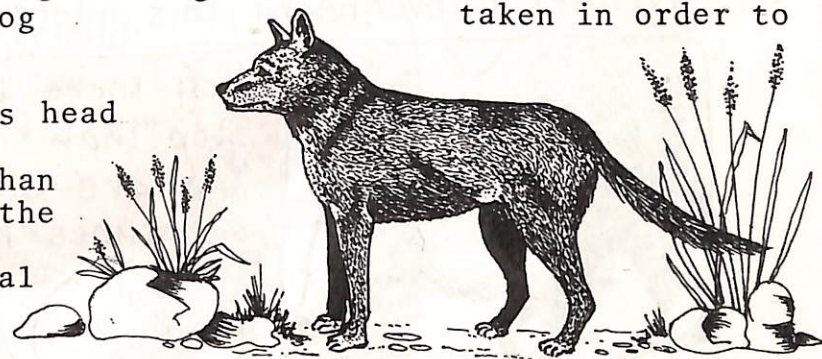
Unlike the normal dog it does not usually bark, but howls instead. Often a group of dingoes will howl together. Groups are formed in the breeding season during winter. A normal litter contains between 5-7 pups.

Studies have shown that live stock killed is about 4% of a dingo's food. Generally they mainly eat rabbits, rodents, lizards, kangaroos, wombats and wallabies. Killing off dingoes has resulted in an increase in pasture eating animals. So the farmer gains nothing because there is less food for his stock.

The use of 1080 to poison animals considered pests has caused the deaths of more wildlife than was intended. This happens occasionally because animals which aren't supposed to eat the baits do eat them.

If an animal eats a lot of the bait another one can come along, eat the dead animal and die too.

However, great care is taken in order to



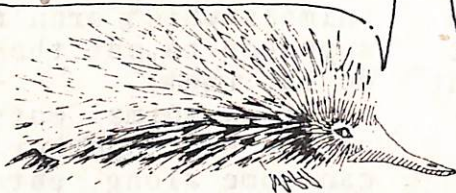
overcome this. Special permission for poisoning must be obtained first. Sometimes the bait is colored to deter birds from eating it. They don't seem to like eating bright blue or green things. Like a blue carrot?

I'll stick with leaves, thanks!



Wonderoo on Holidays in the Grampians

You platypuses look bits of freaks !!



Listen to who's talking ! You Echidnas are far funnier than us!



While hopping around in the Grampians Wonderoo overheard this interesting argument...



Hey there you two !! Stop that silly quarrel. You are both amazing creatures - not funny ones !

Boy! You've got funny feet!

Oh yeah! You've got funny fur.



You see once all the animals on earth were reptiles - They all had backbones and laid eggs ... They were cold blooded with leathery skin so they didn't need furry coats to keep them warm.



Then many of the reptiles died out and others changed into warm blooded furry animals - mammoths - sabre-toothed tigers and others turned into platypuses and echidnas...

BUT while others changed still further, the platypus and echidnas have changed very little since that time - So you see little friends you are living members of a type of animal life that no longer exists anywhere but here in Australia!



wow!

gosh!

Gee Plat old mate, those are pretty fancy webbed feet!



Thanks Ernie. Your spines are pretty neat too !!

Text : H.J. LAWRY
Artist : A. DUNSTAN

Volcanic Ash

ROCKS

For those of you who have an interest in rocks, we thought you might like to know more about the 3 basic types of rocks. Recently, a girl from East Ringwood school found opalite at her letter box! Good hunting.

1. Igneous. (From the latin word ignis = fire)

These rocks have solidified from molten lava and have crystals in them. Eg. Granite (used for the pylons of Sydney Harbor Bridge), Basalt (or 'bluestone') and Pumice (a very light rock with holes in it).

Cools quickly and forms small crystals. Volcanic rock. Example... Basalt.

Dyke rock,... smooth with some large crystals.

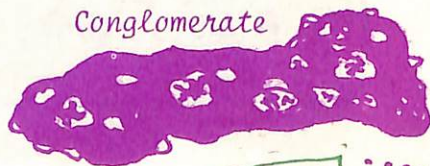
Cools slowly... large crystals. Plutonic rock. Example... Granite.

2. Sedimentary.

These rocks are made up of layer upon layer of parts of other rocks washed together by water or blown by the wind. Gradually they get harder and they may include fossils between their layers. Sedimentary rocks with lumps of other rocks in them are called Conglomerate (or "Puddingstone") rocks. Fine mud and clay make up Shale, whilst shells (which you can still see if you look at limestone under a hand lens) make limestone and chalk - over thousands of years of course. Coal is a sedimentary rock made from plants which died millions of years ago.

Shale

Conglomerate



RUBIES

MOONSTONES

JASPER

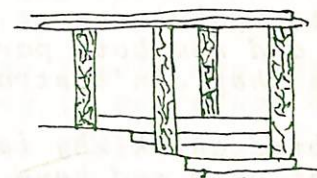
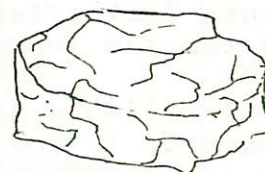
3. Altered or Metamorphic.

These rocks have been changed by heat or pressure. For example, Limestone under heat or pressure becomes Marble, and Shale under great pressure becomes Slate - - that hard, grey, flakey rock that was used to write on like a blackboard by school children years ago.



Limestone

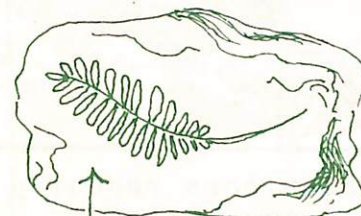
(white, powdery)...becomes Marble (Many colors, hard and with a beautiful veined ripple in it. Polishes well and is used in expensive buildings a lot).



Marble columns and steps.

Fossils.

Most fossils are found in Sedimentary rocks. They are the remains of plants and animals trapped between two layers of rock.



Dark "print" of a fern.

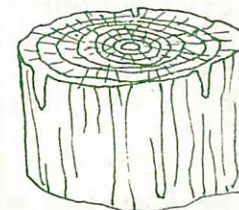


Shell

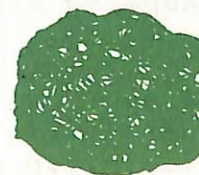
Trilobite

Some other 'finds'.

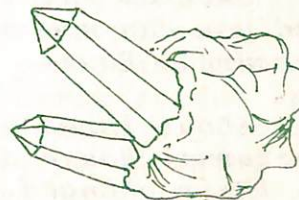
Besides striking it rich by finding gold or gemstones, there are other things in the earth worth looking for. For example.....



Petrified wood (half-way between wood and rock).



Magnetite (black) (Magnetic rock)



Crystals (such as in quartz).

EMERALDS

GOLD

SAPPHIRES

TIN

DIAMONDS

AGATE

ORE

What's Happening?

Four black swans hatched recently. What are young swans called? (See last month's issue if you can't remember.) Their nest was built on an island in the middle of the pond near the front entrance. It was about two metres in diameter. Both parents took turns at sitting on the eggs for about six weeks, and now both parents look after the young, making sure they don't stray too far from them.

A lyrebird chick (Why is it called a lyrebird?) was donated last year and hand raised, is now on display in the R.A.C.V. aviary where it has settled in with the female already there.

A group of koalas has arrived from the Melbourne Zoo.

Nocturnal House...



Kowari.

The kowari is the first animal you see when you enter. It is a marsupial, the size of a small rat. It lives in central Australia and spends the day sleeping in the burrow—Can you think why?

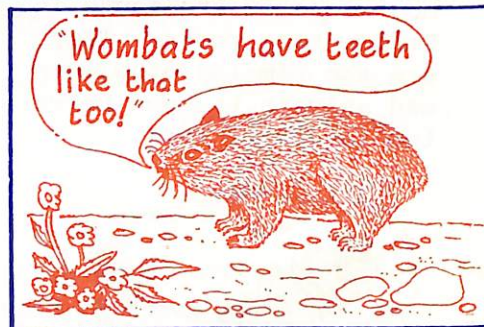
The female may have up to six young in her pouch at one time!

The kowari has needle sharp teeth to catch and feed on small mammals, birds, reptiles and some insects.

SIR COLIN MCKENZIE FAUNA PARK (Healesville Sanctuary)

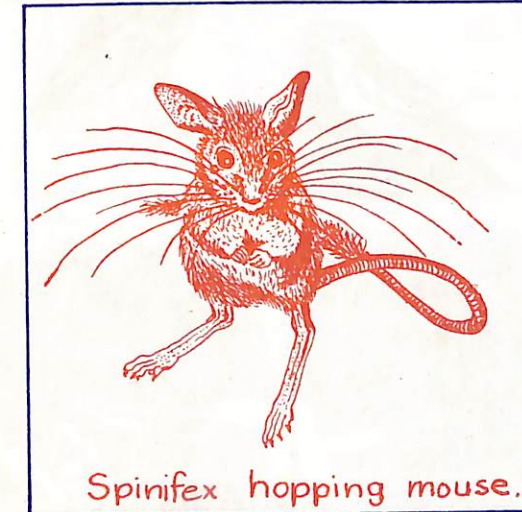
These koalas will live in the red kangaroo paddock. The display has been especially prepared for the new arrivals.

Koalas have teeth like rodents that keep on growing. Thus they must keep on grinding and chewing to wear them down to a comfortable length.



Several spinifex hopping mice have been born recently and you can now see hopping mice of all ages in the Nocturnal House.

About three years ago you may have read about the Nocturnal House at Healesville. The animals settled in well to their changed cycle, (sleep at night and eat during the day). Over the next few issues you will meet some new animals and become re-aquainted with those you already know.



Spinifex hopping mouse.

The spinifex hopping mouse is one of the most popular animals in the Nocturnal House. It is about the size of a large house mouse but with its strong back legs it can hop or jump large distances for its size. The hopping mouse feeds mainly on seeds, but occasionally takes berries, shoots, and insects.

It is found in flat, sandy country; desert complexes, dune and spinifex grassland where it digs a deep burrow system in the sand. Up to eight can live in the same burrow. It spends the day in a large sleeping burrow deep underground. The young are born in an underground chamber in a cup-shaped grass nest. There are usually 3-5 in a litter. Questions may be sent to the Education Officer, Sir C. Mc Kenzie Fauna Park, P.O. Box 248, Healesville, 3777.

What To Look For In



MAY



EUCALYPTS

There are many types of eucalypts which roughly can be divided into groups according to their bark.

Smooth-barked eucalypts are called gums. The bark usually peels off in flakes or ribbons.



On stringybarks the bark is thick, fibrous and stringy.



Ironbarks have thick, hard but brittle bark, deeply furrowed.

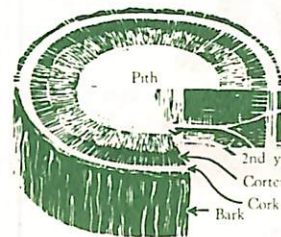
Box bark is scaly, furrowed bark, somewhat similar to both stringybark and ironbark.



Peppermint bark resembles that of the box, but is more stringy and furrowed.

TREES AND THEIR BARK

Why do trees have bark? Many barks have beautiful colours and patterns.



Investigate the uses that aborigines made of bark. What use is made of bark by white men?



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.

Flame breasted robin



Pied currawong



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.

SPIDERS

How are spiders beneficial?



Red-back or jockey spider

The red-back is the only Victorian spider known to cause death to man. It likes gloomy places.

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



Wolf spider

Why is it called "wolf"?



Orb web of garden spider

Hunt-man spider



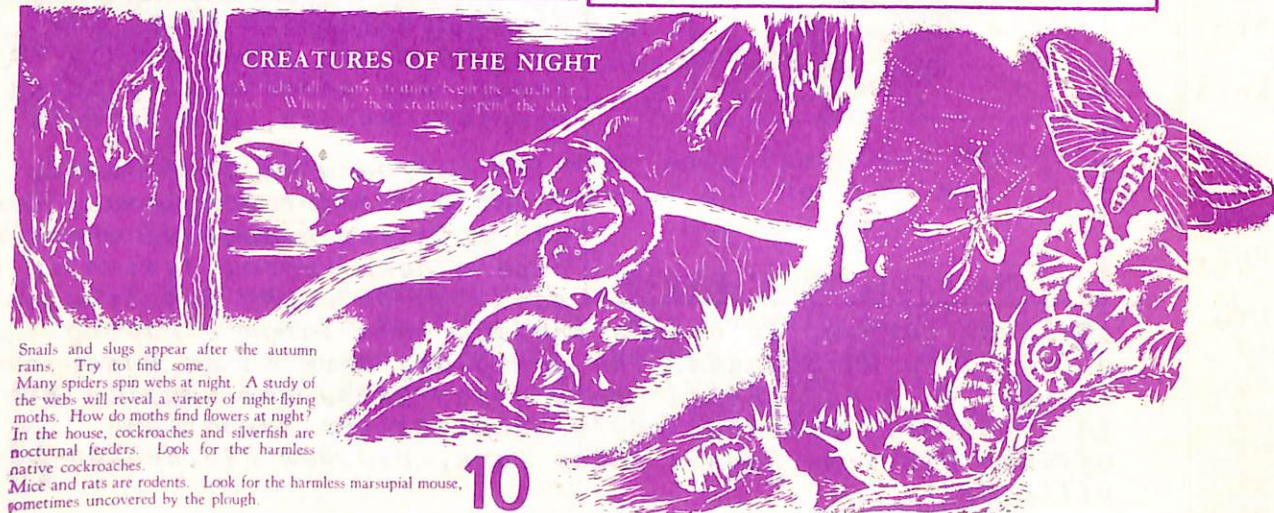
There are three main types of lid. Try to find an example of each.



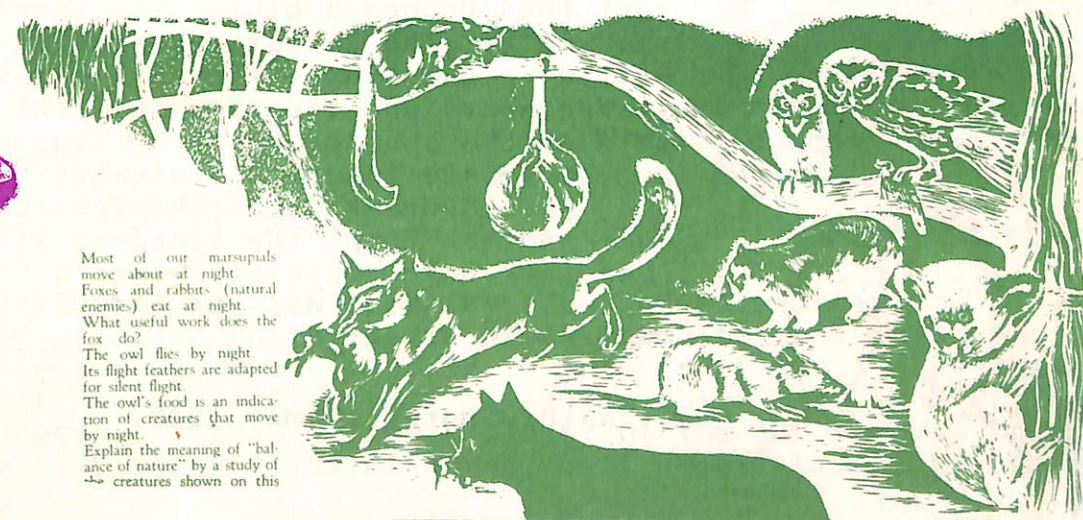
Trapdoors

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

A nightfall, many creatures begin the search for food. Where do these creatures spend the day?



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. Look for the harmless marsupial mouse, sometimes uncovered by the plough.



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

★★★ THIS 'N' THAT ★★★

THE CUCKOO THAT ISN'T: One of the most elegant birds of the outer Melbourne suburbs is a slim, pale grey-blue bird with a black head and chin. This chap masquerades under the name of the Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike; (the cuckoo part of which obviously comes from its gracefully undulating flight). But there the resemblance ends. In no way does this "cuckoo" leave her eggs in another bird's nest. Her own nest is usually a slightly saucer-shaped one of twigs and web, placed on the horizontal fork of a branch. Often they build in the same fork year after year. They are good friends of man as their main diet is made up of insects, grubs and berries. Watch for this fine feathered fellow and find out more about him. This could lead to a search for information about the real cuckoos and their unusual habits.



Crickets are probably among the noisiest of insects, but have you ever wondered how they manage to make their songs? Actually they sing by raising their wings and scratching them one over the other so quickly that they become a blur. The warmer the weather the faster the cricket will move and sing. With all crickets, grasshoppers and cicadas, only the male of the species does the singing as the female is quite "voiceless".



An old Greek dramatist Xenarchus once wrote: "Happy the cicades' lives, for they have voiceless wives". No doubt in these days of Women's Lib. many would disagree.

"Nature Notes... May 1980.

On a recent trip to Rutherglen, I came across a tiger snake's skin lying near a rusty metal post it had obviously used it to help it shed its skin. Sloughing (sluff-ing) is something all snakes do at various times. Shedding is more frequent among younger snakes. Can you think why this would be so? Injured snakes also shed their skins more often than normal, until their wounds are completely healed. The snake first finds some projection to rub against. It commences by rubbing loose the skin around the lips. It then peels the skin back, turning it inside-out as it casts it off. If you closely examine the skin you can see the transparent protective scales which covered the snakes eyes.

Generally most non-venomous snakes produce their young by egg laying; while most venomous ones give birth to live babies. The young layed in eggs, cut their way out of the egg by means of a special tooth at the front of their mouths. This tooth is later disgarded with the first shedding of its skin.

"You shouldn't have told him washing his skin was easier!"



SOME SNAKE FALLACIES:

The forked tongue of a snake is not a fang and cannot harm you.

Snakes have no exterior ears and are mainly insensitive to airborne sounds, and can't be charmed by music.

Snakes do not like milk better than water.

Snakes are now protected to a certain degree in Victoria, in that you are not allowed to kill them unless they attack you. In the past many people have been bitten while trying to kill snakes which have been forced to fight for their lives. Of the 110 species known to occur in Australia, only a small number are dangerous to man.

CONGRATULATIONS GO TO JENNIFER BRUCE FOR
THIS MONTH'S WALLY BOOK AWARD!

Wombats

The wombat is rarely seen by day. The wombat is thick set and tail-less. It grows up to about 110 cm and weighs up to 45 kilograms.

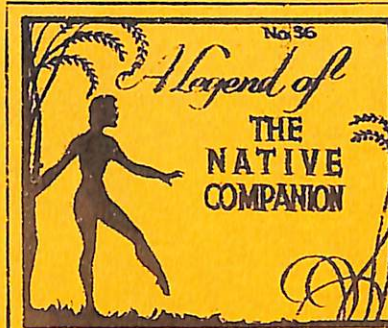
They feed on grasses and vegetation. There are two main groups. The first group consists of the common or naked-nosed wombats, of New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania. The second group consists of the hairy nosed wombats of South Australia and Central Queensland. Common Wombats live in mountainous forest regions. Hairy-nosed wombats live in open plains. Wombats live in burrows in the day and go out at night to forage for food. Wombats would make a lovable, cuddly pet if owners lived in an outback place.

Some books have been written about wombats and one of them is "Woop the Wombat".

I would like to have a wombat but I can't because we live in the city.

Jennifer Bruce

Hi!
I'm a
Common
Wombat



The most beautiful dancer in the land of the blacks was a fair young maiden named Bralgah.

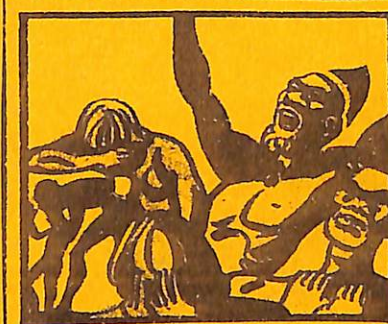


Every day Bralgah used to dance for her people and they loved her for the joy she gave them.



But one day the evil spirits of the whirlwind seized the lovely dancer and carried her far away.

LEGEND TIME...



Then a great cry of grief came from all the people and the pain of sadness filled their hearts.



But many days later a strange new bird came shyly to their camp, and when the people turned to look at it, the bird began dancing lightly to and fro in a way that only Bralgah herself could dance.



Then the people knew that Bralgah had come back, and though she was now a bird called the Native Companion they were happy because she was still the most beautiful dancer in all the land.



PUZZLES

Who am I?

1	My first is in king, But not in queen.
2	My next is in song, But not iseen.
3	My third and my last- Not in fist but in fast,
4	And my fourth is the second in gleam.
5	

See if you can
unjumble the names
of these birds
which nest on the
ground, on rocks,
or mounds:

MUE, VERPLO,

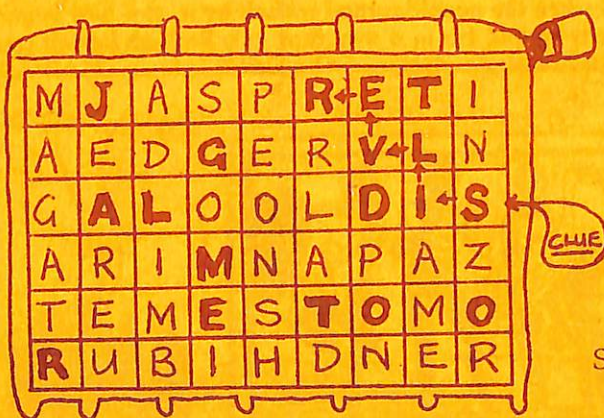
NSWA, BLIDRREY,

BBRRWOEI.

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU CROSS A
TERMITE WITH A PRAYING MANTIS?

ANSWER: A BUG THAT SAYS GRACE BEFORE IT
EATS YOUR HOUSE!

Word TREASURE CHEST!



In the Treasure Chest
are 15 minerals- most of
them gems and precious
stones. The words begin
with the heavily
printed letters, except
for silver which is
already done to show
you how hard some of
them are to find.

GOT A PUZZLE OR A
RIDDLE?

Send it to: Nature Notes,
P.O.Box 28,
East Ringwood,
3135.

A Ringwood Inspectorate Publication.