


# NATURE NOTES



King Parrot

Registered for post  
in Australia-  
Category "B"

VOL. 17

NO. 6

A Ringwood Inspectorate Publication.



# Editorial

This month's cover features the beautiful King Parrot. It is mentioned in "This'n'That" on pages 10 and 11.

A Competition For The Best Designed Cover will be held each month and winning entries will be exhibited on our front cover. It is very important that the entries be done in black-ink or texta or biro. Lead pencil should not be used. Please remember to include your name, address and age or grade. We will try to use as many as is possible. The color will be added to the prize winning pictures when we print them on the front covers. The types of drawings needed are ones showing native animals, birds, trees, flowers, insects, spiders, reptiles, shells or shrubs. Get the idea? Make sure that the main thing in your picture is nice and big compared to the size of the whole of the drawing. You might like to design a poster type of front cover-telling about the things we need to protect or action we should take to help clean up or save our unique environment. Have a go, it only costs a postage stamp.

Wally created some havoc last issue by hiding the answers to our riddles, they are on the back of this month's issue, I THINK, I...HOPE...?

Thanks go to Alison Ouxbury for your letter about the ring-tailed possum. (You must have E.S.P. Alison because he is featured in this month's issue on pages 4&5.)

Apologies to Darren Horn from Wally- I think his reading glasses must have fogged up with all this cold weather we've been having.

Editor,

Russell Hall.

Our address is: P.O.Box 28,

Ringwood East, Vic.,

3134.

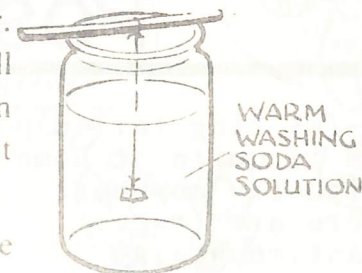
(PHONE:- 879-1263)

NATURE NOTES IS CLASSIFIED "CATEGORY B"  
FOR POSTING.

IT IS A RINGWOOD INSPECTORATE PUBLICATION.

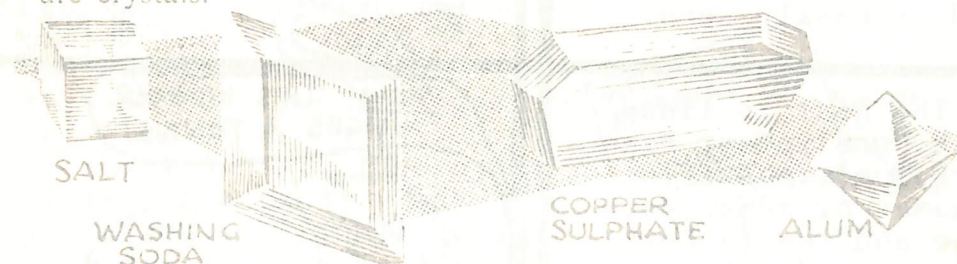
## TRY GROWING THIS

Mix some washing soda with hot water. Stir in the washing soda till no more will dissolve. Hang a thread with a button on the end in the warm solution and leave it to cool.



Crystals of washing soda form on the thread.

Perfect crystals have very regular shapes. You can try with other solutions and examine your crystals with a lens. Precious stones are crystals.



**MAKING A CRYSTAL GARDEN.** Obtain a tin of 'water-glass' which is used for preserving eggs. Half fill a jam jar with the water-glass and then fill up with water. Stir until it is well mixed. Drop coloured crystals to the bottom of the jar and leave them for a few days. Interesting, tree-like growths are produced as the crystals dissolve in the water-glass.



White crystals	—	washing soda
Blue crystals	—	copper sulphate
Green crystals	—	iron sulphate
Orange crystals	—	potassium dichromate

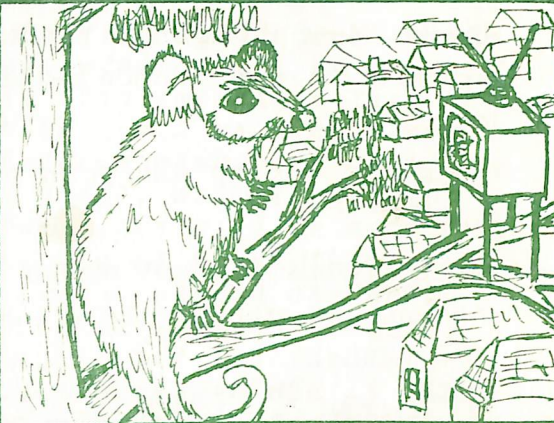
**SOME OF THESE ARE POISONS! BE CAREFUL.**



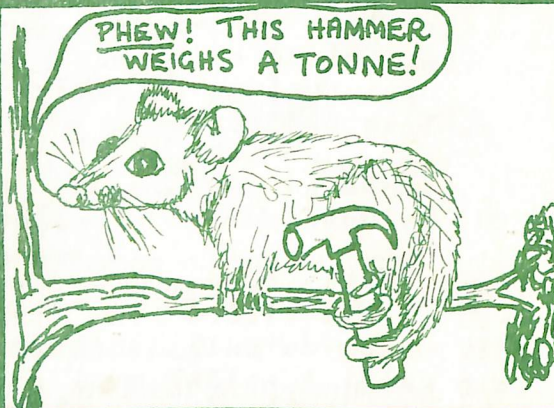
# Ring-tailed Possum.

DRAWINGS & TEXT:  
R. HALL

The ring-tailed possum is quite at home in virtually anywhere there are trees: coast, mountain, suburb or forest, he is happy. The nest is round (30 cms. in diameter) and ball shaped. Often it stands out and is easily seen.



The nest is lined with eucalypt or tree bark, sometimes ferns, grasses or moss. Both male and female build the nest. Bundles of material are often carried in their coiled tail. It uses its tail to help it move about in the trees.



Possums breed once or twice depending on the climate, (once in Vic. in winter). The average litter is two. Females carrying young are extremely friendly and groups of up to five possums, of various ages have been found sharing nests.



Deaths among the young are extremely high with up to 3 in every 4 dying before age 18 months. Owls prey on young possums, as well as pet cats and feral cats (tame cats gone wild because no-one feeds them) who also kill possums. Feral cats kill off much of the small native animal population.



Still ring-tails are one of the few which can survive. Because they do not live in house roofs (as do brush-tailed possums) or eat flowers, it is not harmed by man. It eats mainly gum leaves, shoots, and berries of many different shrubs. Seeing eucalypts are not sprayed it is generally safe from pesticides.



Ringtails are about 60 cm. in length. As many as 3 may occupy a hectare in ideal conditions. At times territorial fighting has been seen. However, disaster can strike if ringtails are kept in the same cage—they fight fiercely, sometimes kill each other. Why should they do this when they live peaceably normally?





The other day friends of mine had a house warming party, I hadn't seen their home before and I was very impressed.

The house is timber and mud brick, round in shape, weathered grey S.S.C. pole in the middle supporting the roof, the floors are jarrah, the ceiling pine and the walls are all Tasmanian Oak.

What has this got to do with Nature Notes? Well the timbers are all from trees grown in Australia. These friends of mine love the



From

'Australian Eucalypts'

by M. Millett page 71



Pinus radiata  
-page 25, "The Love Of Trees"-  
K.Beckett.

look and feel of timber just as I do.

Australian forests provide us with a very wide range of timbers which have many different properties.

by David Dobson.

As well as our trees most of you would have seen the pine plantations

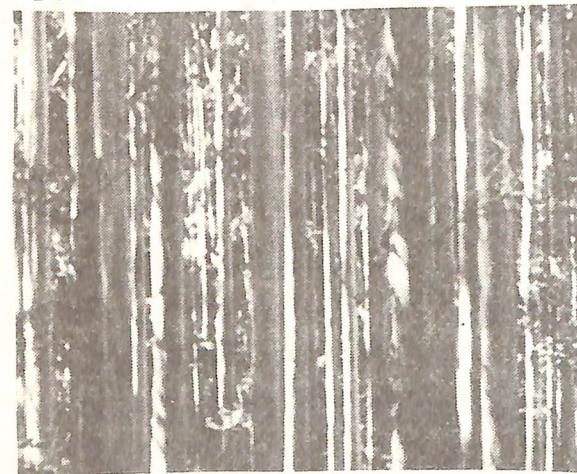
the Victorian Forestry Commission has planted.

This pine or pinus radiata comes from California in America and its common name is monterey pine.

This tree grows quickly and has soft wood; we use it in many things from furn

iture to frames in our homes -outside it lasts well if treated to stop it from rotting. We also use other timbers from overseas such as oregon, teak and cedar. These imported timbers are mainly softwoods.

We in Victoria are very lucky being able to grow a wide variety of trees whose timber can be used for different jobs. Has anyone in your grade been to Echuc? If so, they probably saw the timber from the River Red Gum being cut in the mill right on the river bank near the wharf. This deep red timber is very strong



Tasmanian blue gum -page 64  
" The Love Of Trees"-K.Beckett.



Red river gum-page 65, "The Love Of Trees"-K.Beckett.

and resists rotting even if it gets wet, so we use it fence posts and stumps in our homes. It is also used as railway sleepers. One of the other important groups in Victoria is what is known as ordinary builders hardwood. This is used in the frames of our homes, the floors, and many other places in our homes. Furniture is also made from hardwood. This timber mainly from Mountain Ash and Tasmanian Blue Gum. Mountain Ash (which grows in the Dandenongs) is the tallest hardwood tree in the world, some measured 90 m. Can you make a collection of different timbers and their uses.



# Things To Look For -

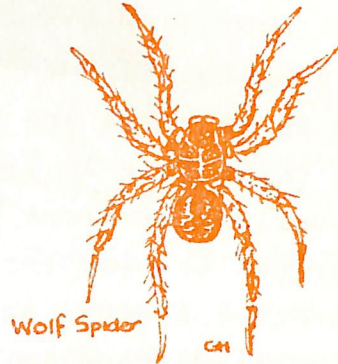
IN THE  
GARDEN



There is so much to see in the garden that you will probably see many things.

\* \* \* \* \*

⊕ Spiders will be common at certain times of the year. The Wolf Spider races over the ground to catch its prey. It lives in a hole in the ground. You may see a mother carrying her young on her back. The Badge Spider is tan-coloured (about the size of a Huntsman) and has a brilliant shield badge on its tummy. Its bite can be very sore



\* \* \* \* \*

⊕ The Garden Snail was brought to Australia to feed the birds which had been introduced. Today they do millions of dollars worth of damage every year.



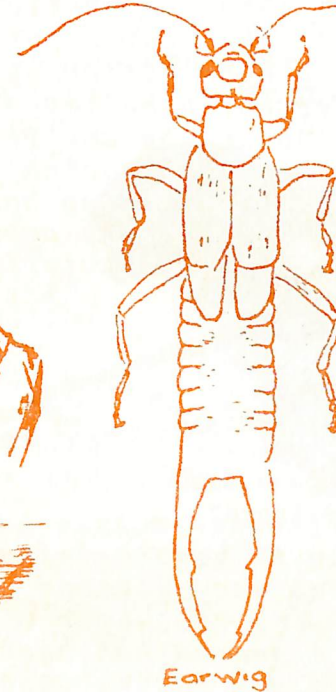
⊕ The Garden Slug also does a lot of damage in the garden. Perhaps you might find a Giant Slug. This slug is very fond of milk and when



extended may be nearly 7½ cm. long! Its name is Himax Maxima.

\* \* \* \* \*

⊕ Earwigs occur throughout the world and there are many kinds. Can you find more than one kind? Mother earwig looks after her eggs, an unusual occurrence among insects. The common earwig most often found in gardens is of European origin.



Earwig

⊕ Of course you know the Cabbage White Butterfly. See if you can tell a male from a female.

\* \* \* \* \*

⊕ More about spiders. Beware of the Jockey Spider or Red-back Spider. It has a red stripe on its back and is very venomous. It is usually found around old tins in dark corners. The Leaf curling Spider is found easily, because it places a leaf in its web.



Jockey Spider



# THIS 'N' THAT... L. Delacca

## GOANNA -FACT AND FICTION

One of the most interesting characters of the Australia bush is the dear old goanna. Many have been the tall tales and true that have been told about this remarkable creature. Many years ago I boarded on a farm near Numurkah and the old farmer's dog had apparently been bitten by a goanna several years before. He fervently believed that the wound broke out every year or so and became re-infected. This is one of the myths about the goanna's bite. It is true however, that because of his feeding habits he carries

a large amount of  
bacteria in  
his mouth  
so



A PERENTIE...taken from page 2198  
"Australia's Wildlife Heritage"

that if bitten the wound is likely to become infected and very difficult to clear up- but once cleared up properly that's it. I had an exciting encounter with one when teaching in a rural school. A goanna had become lodged on a ledge in the classroom and having observed him at length thought it time to remove him with the aid of a broom. The five foot (150 cm.) goanna launched himself at me, landed on my arm and with tremendous speed promptly shot out the door. I'm not sure yet who had the greatest fright. However the dozen or so wide-eyed bush children enjoyed it no-end and I made no delay in dabbing the deep scratches on my arm with Dettol-myths not withstanding.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND.....

There is always something special about having an animal from the wild come to your hand, and even more

special if this happens to be one of Australia's most spectacular birds.

A few weeks ago we made a visit to the lovely Maroondah Dam and on arrival our attention was attracted by a riot of color and noise near the kiosks. The cause of all this commotion was a flock of beautiful King Parrots. We bought some peanuts and placed small piles on the tables.

KING PARROT -Page 116  
"Australian Birds"-R.Hill.

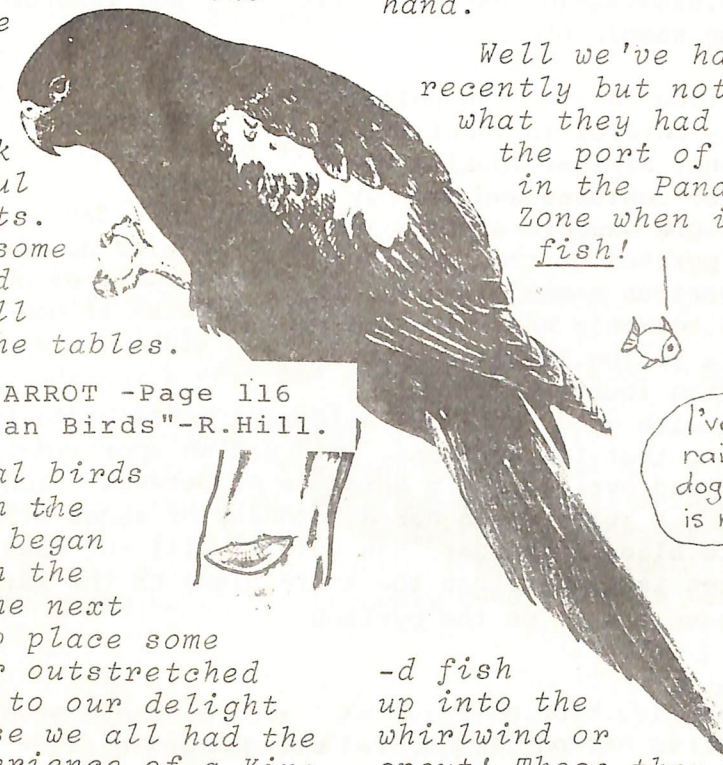
Soon several birds alighted on the tables and began feasting on the peanuts. The next step was to place some nuts on our outstretched hands, and to our delight and surprise we all had the unique experience of a King Parrot alighting on and eating from our hands.

Bird books say that this bird is very wary and difficult to approach. I guess this depends on the state

of the appetite and what's on the menu.

Look this bird up in your bird book and find out about his normal feeding habits and life, or better still journey up to the higher altitudes and view him at first hand.

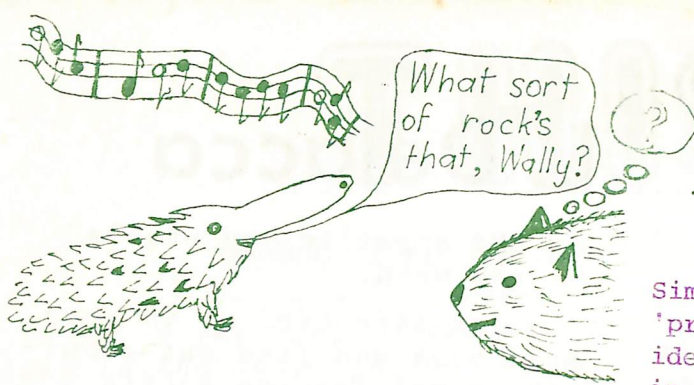
Well we've had some rain recently but nothing like what they had in 1933, on the port of Cristobal, in the Panama Canal Zone when it rained fish!



I've heard of raining cats and dogs- but this is ridiculous!

The surprise are sucked up into the sky by a whirlwind or water spout! These then rain down on the earth. Reports of this happening have also come from Canada and other areas of the world. Do you know any other unusual but true stories like this one?





BY B.Archibald

Simple tests can help the 'prospector' and the collector identify minerals and assist in the classifying of them.

Samples can be grouped according to such sight

features as color, lustre (sheen), streak and 'mechanical' features of hardness, cleavage (or way of 'splitting') and fracture (the way in which the sample breaks).

#### HARDNESS

When collecting samples, the collector must be very careful in identifying the specimens. Similar looking material may be confused and wrongly identified. One example of this is pyrite (or pyrites or iron pyrites). These are various names given to the one mineral, commonly known as Fool's Gold. It is a yellow, metallic looking material, often found in close association with gold. With the help of a knife blade, it is easy and simple to test for hardness. Gold has an approximate hardness of 2.5 to 3 and pyrites has a hardness of between 6 and 6.5 (see Moh's Scale) A knife blade has a hardness of about 5.5. Therefore, as the knife blade is harder than gold, it will cut into it with ease. Pyrites is harder than the knife blade so the knife blade will not leave a mark on the pyrites.

#### MOH'S SCALE

1. TALC: Easily scratched with the fingernail.
2. GYPSUM: A fingernail will barely mark it; will not scratch a copper coin.
3. CALCITE: Will scratch copper or can be scratched by it; is not scratched by a fingernail.
4. FLUORITE: Does not scratch apatite or glass; scratches copper.
5. APATITE: Scratches glass with difficulty; is scratched by glass with difficulty; does not scratch feldspar.

6. FELDSPAR: Scratches glass easily; scratched with difficulty by a knife blade.
7. QUARTZ: Not scratched by a knife blade; scratched with difficulty by a file.
8. TOPAZ: Will scratch quartz; will not scratch corundum; is scratched by corundum.
9. CORUNDUM: Will scratch topaz; will not scratch diamond.
10. DIAMOND: Not scratched by any known natural substance; will scratch any other natural substance.

Other simple tests can be carried out without too much difficulty. One example here is that of feel.

Is the sample smooth, soapy or even chalky to feel? Classifying according to color is simple enough but it is not advisable to place too much emphasis on this as an accurate guide to identification.

The color used in this test should be taken from a freshly broken surface. Can you think why? The Streak test is also simple to carry out. The 'streak plate' is a piece of unglazed porcelain, similar to that found on the reverse side of a glazed tile (like the ones used in kitchens or bathrooms). Frequently, a mineral has a different color when in powdered form. When the mineral is scraped against the porcelain this color shows up! The lustre or sheen of a mineral is determined by its ability to absorb or reflect light striking its surface. Some terms which are commonly used for this test are:

- METALLIC: These minerals look like metal; eg. gold, pyrites, galena.  
ADAMANTINE: This lustre appears hard, sparkling and brilliant; eg. diamond.  
VITREOUS: Such minerals look glassy; eg. quartz.  
RESINOUS: The minerals have a texture like resin; eg. opal, amber.  
WAXY: The minerals have a texture like wax; eg. turquoise.  
PEARLY: The mineral is iridescent like the inside of sea shells.  
GREASY: The mineral has an oily feel; eg. haematite.  
SILKY: These minerals look as if they are made of many silk threads; eg. fibrous gypsum.  
EARTHY OR DULL: These have no lustre; eg. clay, kaolin



# Monkey See..

Taken from "Strange Stories Of Life"-Joann A. Lawless  
("As far as can be told this story is true")

A man by the name of James Wide lost both his legs in an accident which happened while he was working on a railway in Africa in 1877.

He then became a signalman. He was able to do his duties in his wheelchair. He lived in a shack near his work. He liked to spend his spare time with Jack, his pet baboon and working in his garden. It seemed that Jack took care of his master.

Jack the baboon pumped er from the well. and carried water. He cleaned the shack and weeded the garden. After breakfast, Jack locked the house and pushed his owner to work in chair made to run on rails.

But that's not all. Jack also helped at the railway. After some time he learned to operate the levelers controlling the signals. Before long he could use other controls that opened and closed the track changes. Jack seemed to know the exact time, each day, when the tracks had to be switched.

A Kenyan baboon like Jack, page 9, Strange Stories Of Life.

In nine years on the job, Jack the baboon never made a mistake nor did he even so much as cause a near miss. In the nine years he helped his master he never missed a day's work.

Jack, an African baboon, became the first animal ever to run a railway!

# Monkey Do.



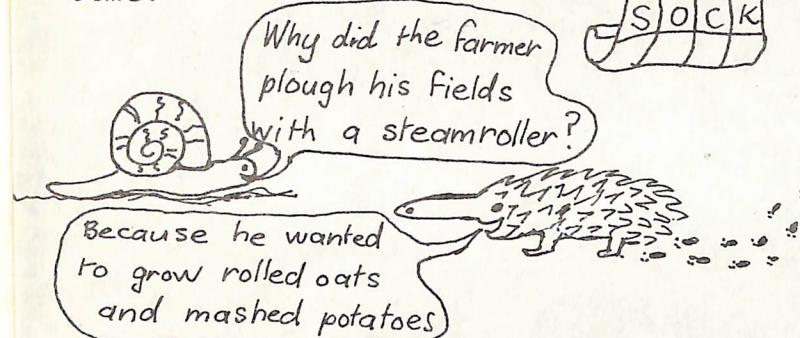
ame a signalman. do his duties chair. He lived his work. He liked spare time with baboon and working It seemed that of his master. baboon pumped er from the well. shack and weeded er breakfast, Jack and pushed his a special wheel-run on rails. not all. Jack also railway. After some to operate the lev-the signals. Before use other controls closed the track seemed to know the each day, when the



He went to the hospital and had a HOPPERKITION!

Word Ladders

Get from the top word to the bottom word by changing one letter each time to make a new word each time.

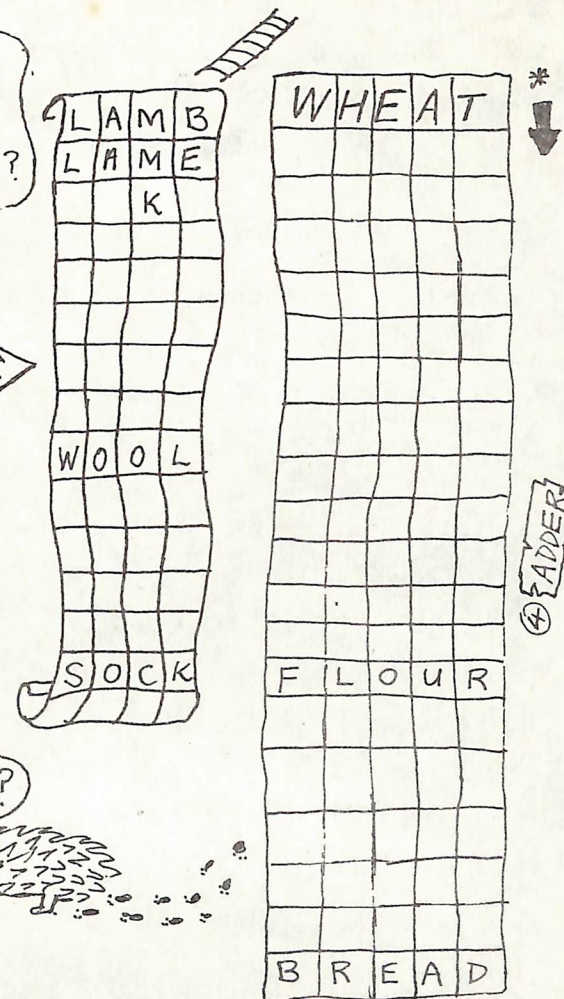


The answer to each one of the questions below is an animal.

-Here's how you do them- 1 letter + what we hear with ANSWER:(b + ear=bear)

1. 1 letter + what you would find in a pen.
2. 3 letters + what you need for cricket.
3. 3 letters + what you do in maths.
4. what you use to climb on the roof (minus) 1 letter.
5. 3 letters + what you use to un-lock a door.

Try to make up some like this: Change one letter - What you may score in a game → goal = goat



5 DONKEY OR MONKEY



# PUZZLES

Naughty Wally!! He stole the answers to last month's riddles. HERE THEY ARE:

- A: It laid the same egg three times!  
 A: The outside.  
 A: Because it might rain cats and dogs.  
 A: Because it was a watch-dog and had to wind up.  
 A: None! The hairs are on the outside!

③ POSSUMS

## RIDDLE MEE REE

My first is in beam,  
 But not in.....



My second is in cup,  
 But not in .....



My third is in honey,  
 As well as in .....



My fourth is in river,  
 And also in .....



My fifth is in pod,  
 But not in .....



My sixth is in ring,  
 But not in .....



My seventh is in train,  
 And also in track.

I'm an animal with  
 a spiny .....



What did the  
 farmer put on  
 the pig's sore  
 nose?

Olknemt.

Answer to riddle  
 rhyme- wombat.

Unscramble these j<sup>u</sup>mb<sup>l</sup>e<sup>d</sup>

animal names:  
 blawlay  
 nagnao  
 psltpavy  
 obtmaw  
 oklao  
 ssumpo  
 oorngaka

MINK

\*ANSWER  
 ON PAGE 15

③ WOMBAT

WHERE CAN  
 I HIDE THESE  
 CLUES



THEY SEEK  
 HIM HERE,  
 THEY SEEK  
 HIM THERE.  
 WALLY WOMBAT