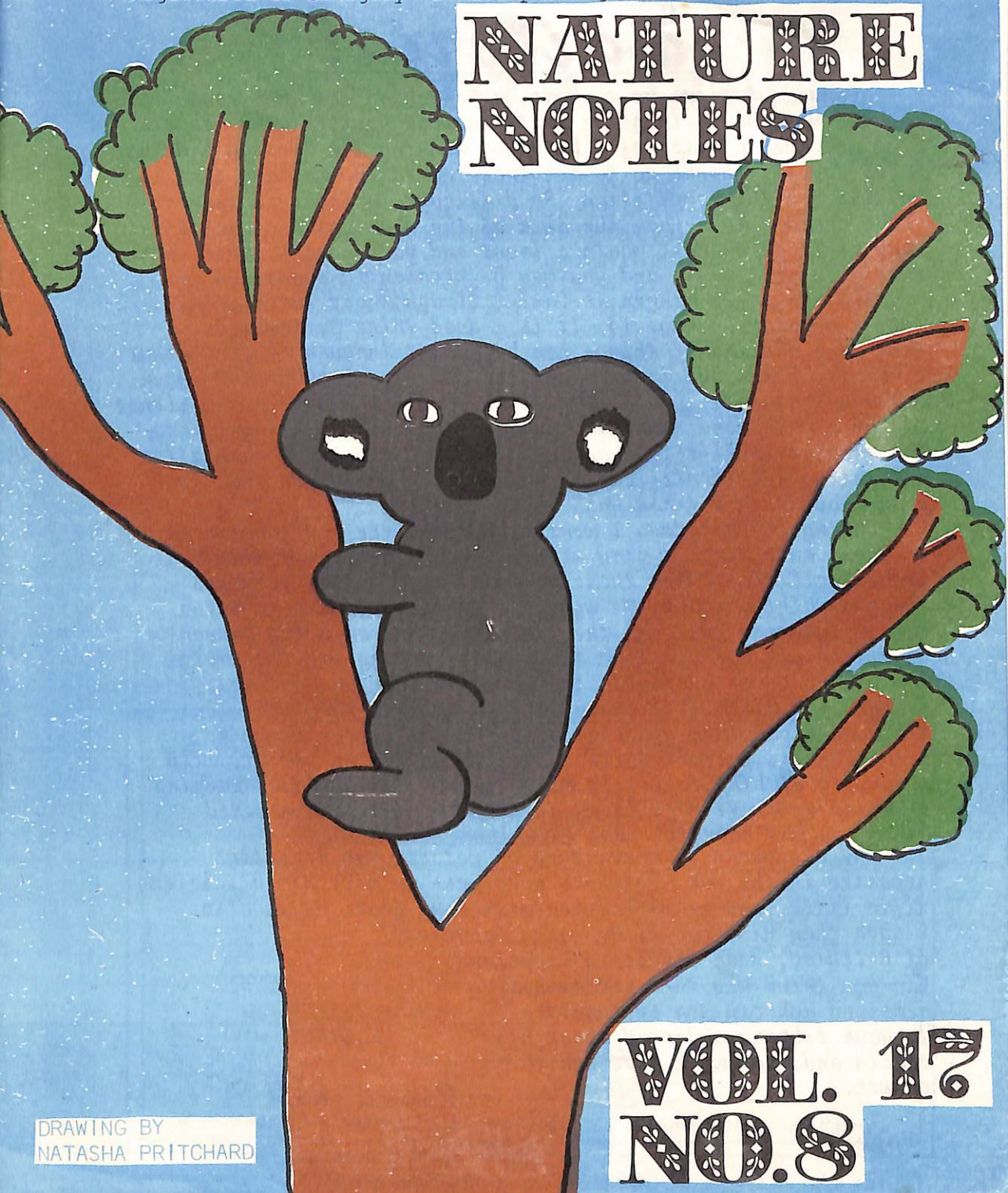


Registered as Category "B" for posting in Australia.

NATURE NOTES



DRAWING BY
NATASHA PRITCHARD

VOL. 17
NO. 8

Editorial

Congratulations go to Natasha Pritchard for this month's cover. Natasha is in grade 4 at Ringwood East Primary School. She receives a prize of a book for winning the "Design A Nature Notes cover". Thanks go to all those children who have sent in entries for the competition. So difficult to choose a winner I have decided to reduce the size of the drawings and use as many as I can on next month's front and back covers. Keep your eyes open next month and you may be pleasantly surprised!

Another prize winner is Daniel Clough, whose interesting letter appears on page 14. It is a good thing to remember that many additional things can be learnt through reading about animals, birds and insects and the way they behave. Then when you are fortunate enough to view these first hand the experience can be a much more rewarding and provide a better insight into the creature's lifestyle and behaviour. Use your library after a sighting for identification and extra information that it can provide to a first hand experience.

During the holidays I went to Healesville and from there to "Donovan's Weir", a very pleasant picnicking area with barbecue facilities. From there we walked to Mt. St. Leonards along a walking track. We were extremely fortunate to see a superb lyrebird just off the trail, sitting on a low branch of a tree. It sat for some time before making for the ample low ground cover available to it in the surrounding area.

A lyrebird will often carry on feeding seemingly oblivious to humans provided you are quiet and still. The lyrebird signalled its presence quite some time before we saw it, with a variety of bird calls. It was then just a matter of keeping a "sharp eye". Perhaps in a quiet spot, in a fern covered gully you may have the same experience. Good luck!

The discovery of a new type of potoroo was recently reported in the Sun. Potorous Kongipes - to give him his scientific title, and means Potoroo with long foot. He is also bigger than his cousin. He was discovered at Bellbird, near Orbost in Gippsland.

Can you think why this fellow has remained unknown for so long? Go to your library and read about his cousin and that will give you the answer.

Editor,

Russell Hall

LETTER TIME

Dear Wally and Co.,

I am writing about the Platypus because I think Australia should be very proud of them. They are, in my opinion, the world's strangest animal. In the water the Platypus uses its strong webbed forefeet for swimming and its hind legs as rudders. On land its forefeet are used to push water out of its fur before it enters its burrow. Its body looks as if it has collected a heap of other animals stuff. It has a duck bill, an otters tail, webbed feet and so on. Another strange thing about it is that it is a mammal and is a marsupial. It lays eggs and has a pouch!

Yours Sincerely,

Daniel Clough.

Ed: Congratulations Daniel, you have won a Periwinkle book for your letter!

Another strange thing about the platypus is that the male has a poisonous spur on its hind leg. Does any other animal you know have a weapon like this?

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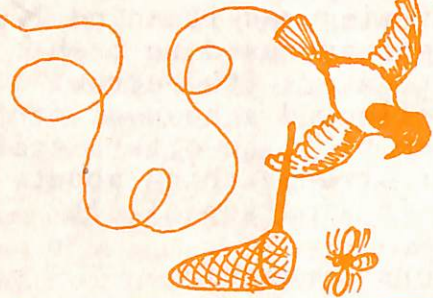
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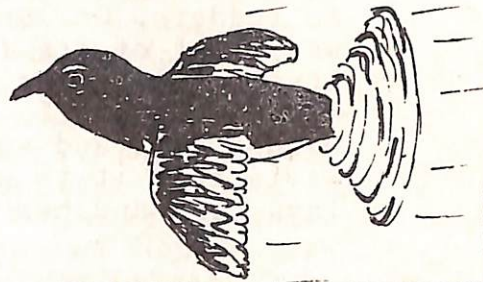
WILLIE WAGTAIL

TEXT &
DRAWINGS:-
R. HALL.

THEIR AGILITY AS FLIERS
MAKE THEM VERY EFFECTIVE
CATCHERS OF INSECTS.



THEIR TAIL PROBABLY
CONTRIBUTES TO THIS AGILITY,
AND IS VERY USEFUL IN FLIGHT.



THE WILLIE WAGTAIL IS OFTEN
FEARLESS WHERE MAN IS
CONCERNED AND IS EASILY TAMED.



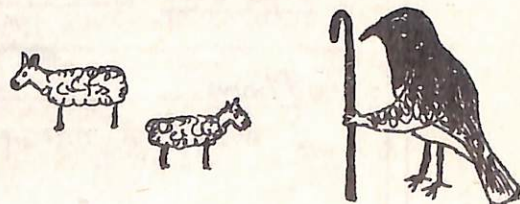
HE ALSO COURAGEOUSLY AND
SUCCESSFULLY DRIVES AWAY MUCH
BIGGER BIRDS - INCLUDING THE WEDGE-
TAILED EAGLE! (SUCH IS THE FURY OF
HIS ATTACK.)



DURING BREEDING SEASON
THE MALE SINGS A CHALLENGE
AT NIGHT. THIS ATTRACTIVE
SONG HAS GAINED HIM
THE NAME OF
"AUSTRALIA'S NIGHTINGALE!"



HE IS ALSO KNOWN AS THE
"SHEPHERD'S COMPANION" BECAUSE
OF HIS HABIT OF SITTING ON, AND
FOLLOWING SHEEP AND CATTLE.



ONE WAGTAIL FOLLOWED A CATTLE
DRIVE FOR 110 KILOMETRES.



THE NORTHERN WAGTAILS ARE
NOTICEABLY SMALLER THAN
THOSE OF THE SOUTH.



NORTHERN WAGTAILS HAVE BEEN
SEEN PERCHING ON CROCODILES
AND EVEN PICKING MEAT FROM THEIR
TEETH!!

THEY HAVE TWO CALLS; "SWEET-
PRETTY-LITTLE-CREATURE", AND
AN ANGRY CALL LIKE THE SHAKING
OF A HALF EMPTY MATCH BOX.

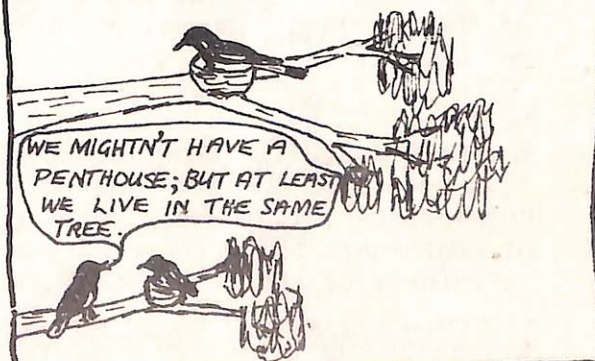
GOT THE MATCHES, NOW
WHERE DID I LEAVE THE
CIGARETTES?!



WAGTAILS OFTEN NEST IN
UNUSUAL PLACES - DOWN MINES,
UNDER VERANDAHS, EVEN ON A
CLOTHESLINE!



THEY OFTEN NEST IN THE SAME
TREE AS THE MAGPIE LARK.



JOIN IN THE March Against Litter



The littering of our environment has caused concern in the minds of responsible people for some time now. One group which has been especially active in bringing to our attention the need to 'clear-up' our country has been the Keep Australia Beautiful Council. They have taken on the job of creating greater public awareness of the reasons why we should ALL play a part in ensuring that our cities and countryside do not become large 'rubbish dumps'. We at Nature Notes have for some time been telling you much about our native flora and fauna. What we would hope is that you might pause a little as you read the information here and think about how you and others might continue to spread the word about the ugly problem of litter.

DID YOU KNOW: *It costs an estimated \$40 million to clean up unnecessary litter in Australia each year.

*The annual bill for cleaning up Melbourne's central city area alone is \$916,000.

*A great deal of pollution of rivers, streams and harbours is caused by careless disposal of waste matter.

*Children can suffocate in carelessly discarded refrigerators and polythene bags.

*Children have died because of the careless disposal of drugs, medicines and weed-killers.

*Bushfires have been started by litter.
The Keep Australia Beautiful Council suggest that people go on littering because of carelessness, laziness, indifference, lack of containers and because of the ugliness or untidiness of their surroundings.

LITTERING IS A YEAR ROUND NATIONAL HABIT.

What can you do...?



..... page 6.

LITTERING gets you NOWHERE

Brett Sampson.

I beg your pardon Mr. Cat
But your littering Croydon, like a brat.
You should keep it, lovely, clean and nice,
Then Mahe, you won't have to eat mice!

Wendy F.

Don't drop litter, we want Croydon
to look good not like a
rubbish dump.

Louise Napier.

Don't Do THE DIRTY ON CROYDON

Tony Sansonetti.

Croydon is a place,
It's not a place for cans,
It's not a place for dither,
Do not dither,
Pick up all the litter, HORRIBLE
Remember!

Keep Croydon Clean.

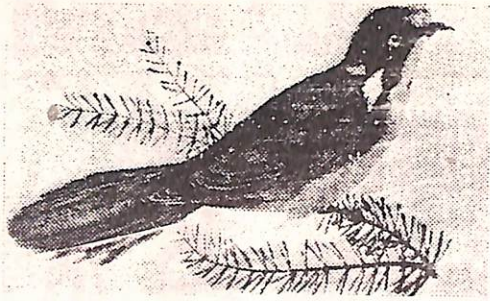
Kathryn Young.

Recently The Keep Croydon Beautiful Committee organised a march in the city centre to bring the litter problem before the Croydon people. Not that Croydon is especially dirty! It was an attempt to remind the public about the need to keep the local area tidy. Children of Croydon South Primary School took part in the 'Tidy School' competition organised by the committee. Some of the posters they designed are shown below. Some of the slogans are particularly effective.

* Article edited
by B. Archibald.



From the "SUN PICTORIAL".



• A helmeted honeyeater.

Land threat to rare bird

LAND clearing has upset a \$2 million project to save Victoria's rarest bird, the helmeted honeyeater.

Just 200 of the birds live in a tiny area along creeks at Yellingbo, 50 km east of Melbourne.

The tiny bird, endemic to Victoria, was adopted as the state's emblem in 1971.

In 1974, the State and Federal Governments began the \$2 million program to buy 340 ha of land adjoining the Yellingbo state fauna reserve, where the honeyeater is fighting for survival.

The deputy director of the Conservation Ministry, Mr Grahame Swartz, said yesterday that \$650,000 had been spent on land purchases so far.

The department had offered to buy 4.4 ha of land near the reserve from farmer Mr Gordon Logan, he said.

"We bought a lot of land from the owner but he was unwilling to sell that piece."

Mr Swartz said the cleared land would have some effect on the honeyeater.

Cr Michael Buxton, Sherbrooke Shire president and member of the Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority, said the 4.4 ha cleared was "an important piece of land" because the honeyeater's habitat was small and limited.

The area, along the Cockatoo, Woori Yallock and Sheep Station Creeks was the last significant area the bird inhabited, he said.

The regional planning authority will discuss with the local shire what action should be taken.

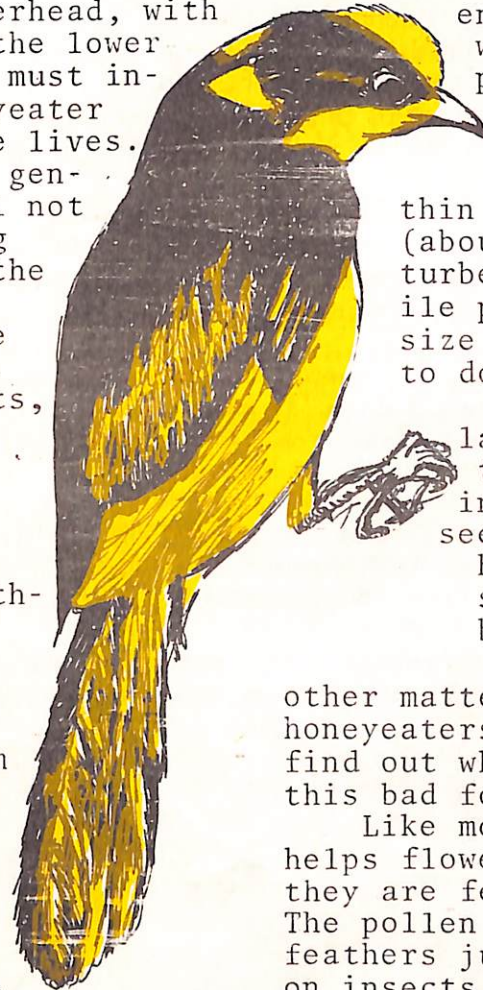
Last Chance... Helmeted honeyeater.

This bird was adopted in 1971 as Victoria's state emblem. The bird now appears to exist in one tiny area at Yellingbo. Its future hangs by a very thin thread.

The type of country it likes is one which has manna gums and swamp gums overhead, with dense scrub and bracken forming the lower part of the forest. This habitat must include a creek. The helmeted honeyeater is very particular about where he lives. Similar areas to this are in the general Yellingbo region but he will not venture into these locals. A long and determined fight to provide the exact environment near where he lives has been carried out by the Bird Observers' Club Of Victoria. Among the plantings were eucalypts, grevilleas, hakeas, banksias and similar nectar bearing trees. Over 4,000 trees and shrubs have been planted. Success in luring the honeyeaters to live in this newly forested area is still forthcoming. Birds have visited the site however.

There are only around 200 helmeted honeyeaters left. This amount seems to be at the minimum level that they could regenerate to any extent, below this number the appear doomed to extinction.

The problems facing them are: human interference, destruction of habitat, (more of this has just occurred), increased predation by mammals and birds, unsuccessful breeding, finding suitable foods, disease.



Landowners have unknowingly or uncaringly destroyed the birds habitat by clearing. Fishermen disturb and break-down the bush on their trips to the creek. Cows and goats also cause damage to the foliage when they enter the area. Cows can interfere with the honeyeaters' nesting places, because they are low down. Picnickers are also unwelcome visitors too.

Because this chap occupies such a thin strip of land along the creeks, (about 166 hectares), his easily disturbed environment is in a very fragile position. Any reduction in the size of his land must bring him closer to doom.

Many bellbirds also occupy this land. Bellbirds often drive away the birds which originally lived in the area. Fortunately, they seem to have no such effect on the helmeted honeyeater who are not scared off by the bullying bellbirds.

The pallid cuckoo is however, another matter. It is a real threat to the honeyeaters' existence. Use your library to find out what the pallid cuckoo does. Why is this bad for the honeyeater?

Like most honeyeaters, the helmeted, helps flowers by pollinating them whilst they are feeding on the flower's nectar. The pollen is caught on the special vertical feathers just above his beak. He also feeds on insects and spiders.

This once quite common bird continues to hold to a tiny plot of land for now; but for how long? Let us hope that he is saved by us for future Australians to see and enjoy.

THIS 'N'

I wonder how many girls and boys have actually seen a goanna in its natural habitat. If you are not able to do this, pay a visit to the Healesville Fauna Park, where there are many splendid specimens.

Australia is host to 18 of the world's 25 species of goanna-family name Varanidae. They may be found in all parts of our continent but most in the dry inland. The name "goanna" is thought to be a corruption of "iguana" because it resembles these large lizards of the Americas. They range in length from about 2 ft. (60 cm.) to 8 ft. (240 cm.) This huge goanna is the parentie of Central Australia. Various species make their homes either in the trees, on land, or in the water.

Although seeming to be ungainly they can move at incredible speed and if no tree is present have been known to go straight up a horse's leg when in danger. I have even heard tell of an occasion when a goanna in fright shot up a man's trouser leg- inside or out I'm not sure.

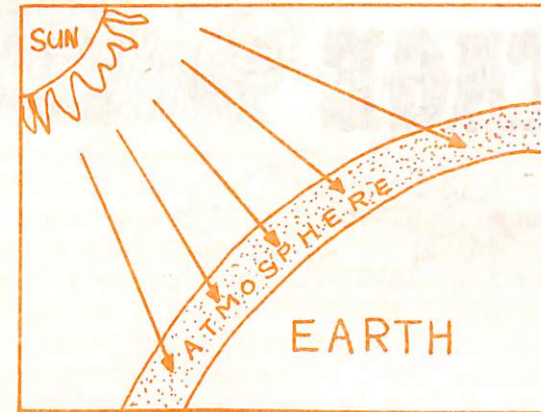
This story was prompted the other day when I happened to notice some "Goanna Salve" in a chemist shop. I didn't know it was still available. Goanna Salve is an ointment made from, among other things, the fatty substance found in the neck glands of the goanna, and is reputed to cure almost anything.

If you want to enjoy a good laugh, read the poem "Johnson's Antidote" by Banjo Paterson- the story of the bushman who tried to cure his poisoned dog with a potion made from the leaves of a plant that was a goanna's favorite meal.

Try to find out more about these interesting creatures. Harold Cogger has written some excellent books about them. See if you have one in your library



THAT ... L. Delacca



Australia is world famous for its blue skies. Have you ever wondered why the sky is blue or rather, seems to be blue? The sky looks blue because the dust in the air absorbs the light waves that form the colors of sunlight, but allow the blue rays to pass through. So next time you admire our beautiful skies, think about the reason for them.

Most people have a dread of bats, but did you know that they are useful to mankind? They destroy an enormous quantity of insects. They are reputed to catch insects at the rate of 600 per hour. This would work out to about 5000 for a night's work. If we multiply this by the number of bats that fly at night, we can realise that the bat is a friend indeed.

Have you ever thought about the difference between a bite and a sting from an insect. The sting of the bee or wasp is carried in the insect's tail. It is connected to a poison gland and works like a doctor's hypodermic needle.

One "biter" is the mosquito which pierces the skin with its beak which is also a tiny hollow needle. The object is to suck up some of your blood; and in doing so, the mosquito injects its saliva to stop the blood from clotting in the "needle". This is what causes the irritation. Unless you are allergic, it is better to be stung than bitten because biting insects can carry disease. The terrible Black Death was spread by the bites of fleas, carried by rats. The rats of course multiplied prolifically due largely to the rubbish left in the open.

Make a list of insects which carry a sting and those which bite and see if you can discover which diseases are carried by which biter.

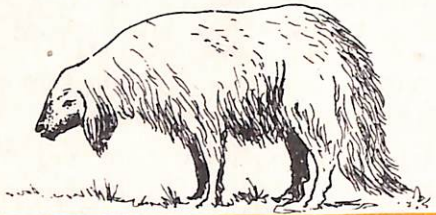


SHEEP... OUR HERITAGE

Text and drawings by
W. Prohasky.



Among the animals brought by Captain Phillip with the First Fleet were a few hairy long-tailed sheep. Most of these died of disease.

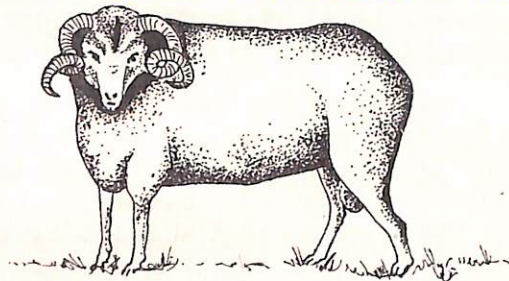


In Macarther's time a merino would have produced a fleece weighing about 2½kg. These days the fleece would weigh about 6kg.

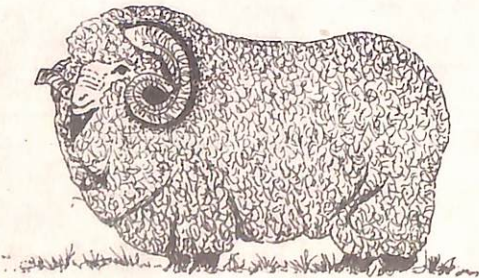


John Macarther, an army officer, is usually given most of the credit for founding the wool industry in Australia. In 1792 he was given a free grant of land in New South Wales. He stocked it with cattle and some sheep. By 1795 he had about 1,000 sheep. They were Cape Indian breeds which grew hair instead of wool.

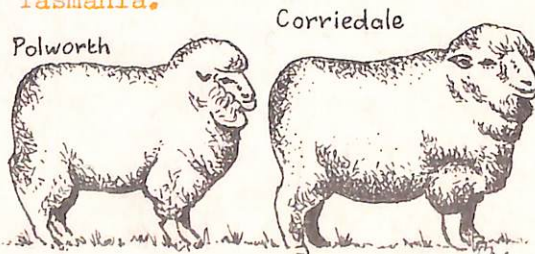
The merino sheep originally came from Spain. This is a Spanish Merino type as they looked in 1828.



This is how they look now. They have the finest and the best wool in the world. Merino sheep provide about three-quarters of the Australian wool-clip.



Other breeds of sheep in Australia are the Corriedale and the Polwarth. The latter is the smaller of the two and does well in colder climates such as Victoria and Tasmania.



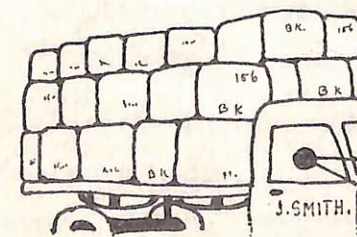
Lambs are born when there is a good supply of green grass. The farmers visit the paddocks often to protect the ewes and their lambs from crows and foxes who may try to injure them.



The shearing is done by men using electric shears, something like large barbers clippers. They are careful not to hurt the sheep or cut the skin.



The wool is then packed into large bales, pressed and labelled and taken by truck to the railway station and from there to the big cities.



The female is called a Ewe - and the male is called a Ram.

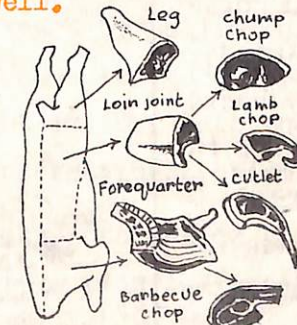
In spring the stockmen ride out with their sheep dogs. They bring in the sheep for shearing and dipping.



The fleece comes off in one piece. The "pick-up" man then tosses it onto the "rolling table" to be sorted into color, quality and length.



Some sheep are sold for their meat, for Australians and overseas countries as well.



All wool is sold by auction. Buyers gather at the wool stores to inspect samples of the wool being sold. We sell wool to more than sixty countries.



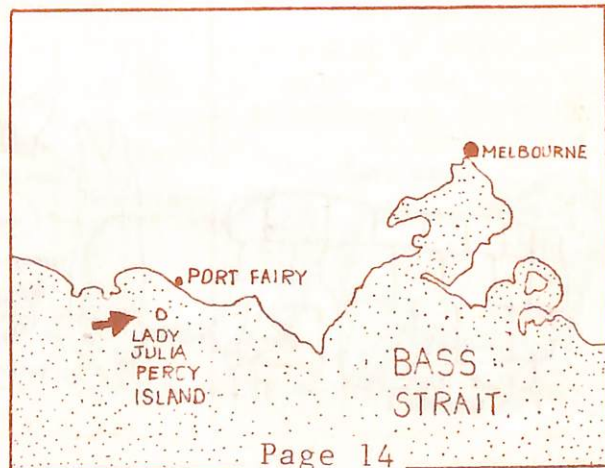
The mystery of the laughing



Australia is a big country and full of legends and folk-lore about horses. The story of Phar Lap or of Gary Owen or the miracle of Archer who won two Melbourne Cups after walking to Flemington from Sydney!

However, the 'laughing horse'

did not do any of these remarkable feats. Even so, he remains a part of our heritage and folk-lore. Many years have passed since the last fishermen reputed to have seen him have passed on, so the myth may never be proven. The laughing horse lived on Lady Julia Percy Island, a small flat-topped island about a mile off the coast of Victoria at Yambuk in Western Victoria. The island is a popular spot for the professional fisherman of crayfish and shark. Today it is a popular big game fishing spot. In the old days, the professional fishermen often went out for days at a time and it was not uncommon for them to return to port with tales of hearing a horse 'whinnying'. In strong winds they often thought they heard voices and noises from off the shore. But these strange noises were only heard when a strong southerly wind was blowing! As time passed, the strange sounds were continuing



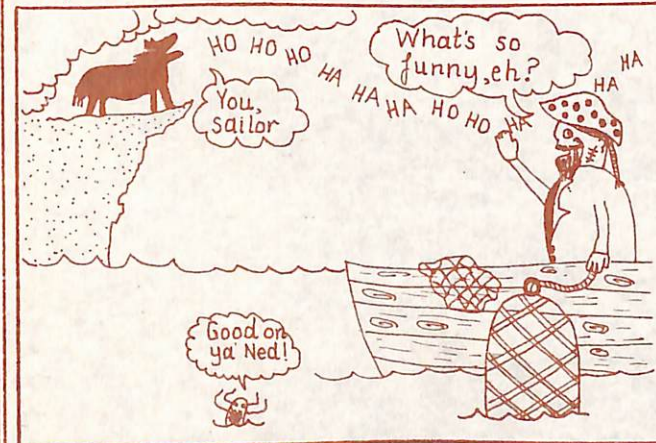
TEXT BY C. BULL
ILLUS: D. BRYDON

horse of Bass Strait

to be heard. Then one early morning in a heavy storm, one fisherman looked up and saw a horse standing on a cliff face of the island. It seemed to be laughing at him as he pulled in the empty cray-pots. At first the other fishermen thought that he had been drinking but soon others saw the horse as well.

HOW DID IT GET THERE?

One of the first uses of the island was to obtain Guano (bird droppings) for use as fertilizer. The pit from which this was obtained was at the end of the most rugged part of the island where it was impossible for any ship to take on cargo. So the guano had to be



transported to the other end of the island, about 500 metres away. In order to transport the guano, a railway trolley line was built across the island. This is part of the legend for there is now no trace of this at all. Only a few metal spikes

have been found which could have been used to hold the rails to sleepers. The legend continues by telling us that to pull the trolleys, a horse was used. When the guano pit was worked out around 1900, the horse was left. But if they left the horse, why didn't they leave the rail lines - an interesting problem.

So in the fog shrouded, rocky outcrops of Lady Julia Percy Island stood a horse, laughing in the wind and watching the fishermen at work. Do you think the legend is true or is it perhaps only just another fisherman's tale? Nature Notes.....Oct.

↑↓ PUZZLE ⇌

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

INSTRUCTIONS: Move one space at a time either way, horizontally or vertically. Most of the creatures listed below have the first letter of their name ringed, but a few don't. The answer to the puzzle is the animal not written below. *It's hidden on another page.*

Slug, Tiger cat, Dingo, Seal, Wolf spider, Funnel-web spider, Lyrebird, Earwig, Shovel-headed worm, Worm, King parrot, Bower bird, Pallid cuckoo, Currawong, Goanna, Ground thrush, Possum.

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



LOOKS PRETTY
EASY TO ME
WALLY, EH?



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