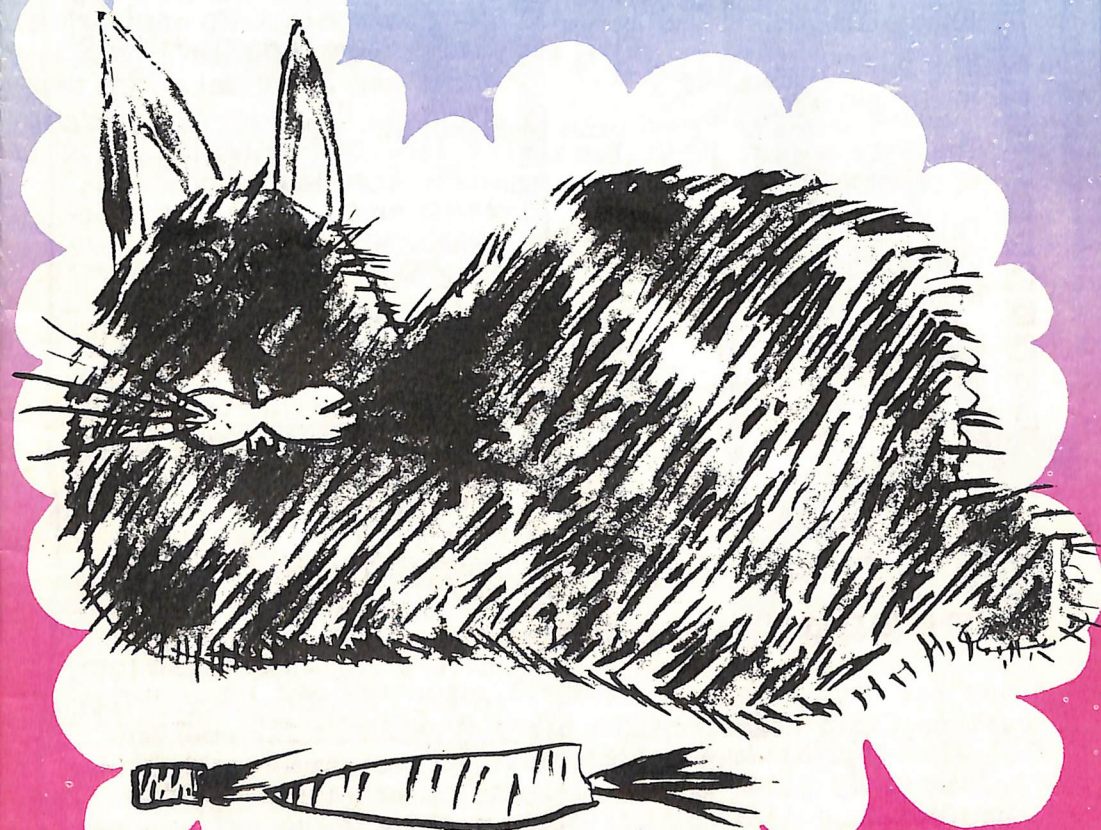


NATURE NOTES



VOLUME 18 NO.7

EDITORIAL

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ARTISTS THIS MONTH

Thanks to Wilma Prohasky,
Carol Measures and Cindy
Hunnam.

your pet but about all animals in his 'animal family'. Thanks must go Craig Hoenderop for his letter about the wounded magpie - thumbs down to the brute who clipped Chook's wings before Craig found him! By the way, is it really legal to keep magpies? Australia has strict laws about which native animals can be kept as pets and which can not. What are the reasons behind them, do you think? Do you agree? I'll leave you with this month's interesting task of 'pet watching'.

Cheerio for now,
Debra Brydon

Hello there,

Are you a 'city slicker' or a country dweller? If you're a country dweller, then you're luckier than Wally and I - forced to live down in the 'big smoke' at Ringwood East. 'City slickers' miss out on the many chances country folk have to observe nature in the bush. That doesn't mean city folk miss out altogether. Common pets like cats, dogs and ducks are often taken for granted. Often we are content to feed them, pat them and play with them - without knowing a thing about their interesting behaviour.

True, many pets have had their bodies and habits changed around so much by humans that they are nothing like bush animals. Take the Greyhound for instance. How has this dog's body been changed around to suit him for a life of racing? Even so, pet animals still have many of the old ways of the wild. Watch your pet closely and you may learn quite a lot - not just about

DEAR WALLY...

WOW! This is Wally's second letter for 1981. Keep them rolling in folks.

Chook, our pet magpie, first came to live at our house last September when she was about two months old. Someone had clipped her wings on one side so she could not fly. We taught her how to perch in our laundry at night, until her feathers grew long enough again so that she could fly into the trees. She was too young to feed herself, so I hand fed her with minced meat. Later, I helped her to catch worms, grubs and bugs in the garden.

As Chook got older, she loved to play outside with our two dogs, Mitz and Casey. We would hear the most awful noise and when we went to look there was Chook sitting on one of the dogs' baskets so she could get into it.

The dogs howled and barked but she always won. Lately, she has become very adventurous and flies much further away from the house. One morning, she arrived at my school at assembly time and landed on one of the girls standing in line! That day she visited some of the classrooms and even went to say hello to our principal, Mr Little. Soon after this time, we had a visit from a flock of Corbyns that come down each year looking for food. Chook took off with them and hasn't been back since. Perhaps we'll see her again someday and renew our friendship. Craig Hoenderop

A WHITE-BACKED
MAGPIE



If the (leaving names out of it) 'black and white' football team were anything like the birds they are named after, they would have to win the premiership every year. Why? Well, Australia has a large number of black and white birds - mudlarks, willy wagtails and butcherbirds. All of them are AGGRESSIVE - this means that they have little or no fear of man. They are often seen around the cities, nesting in open places and always ready to attack any human approaching their nest. Magpies are fearless - this is why it was easy for Craig to tame Chook.

They're driving me QUACKERS....

ARTIST: Wilma Prohasky

...BUT DUCKS CAN MAKE INTERESTING PETS IF YOU ARE LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE THE SPACE TO KEEP THEM. WATCH DUCKS CLOSELY FOR A FEW DAYS AND YOU WILL LEARN A LOT- NOT JUST ABOUT DUCKS- BUT ABOUT ALL THE BIRD FAMILY. MANY DIFFERENT SORTS OF BIRDS, FROM INDIAN MYNAHS TO TURKEYS SHARE MANY OF THE SAME BODY PARTS AND HABITS. CAN YOU NAME SOME OF THESE?

Like swans, ducks have a water bird 'type' of body. For a start, ducks have WATERPROOF feathers. What does this mean? Anyway, because of this waterproofing the ducks stay warm and dry whatever the weather. To keep their feathers in top notch condition, ducks spend a lot of time combing and oiling them with their beaks. This is called PREENING. The oil comes from a special gland on the duck's body. Do any other sorts of bird preen themselves?

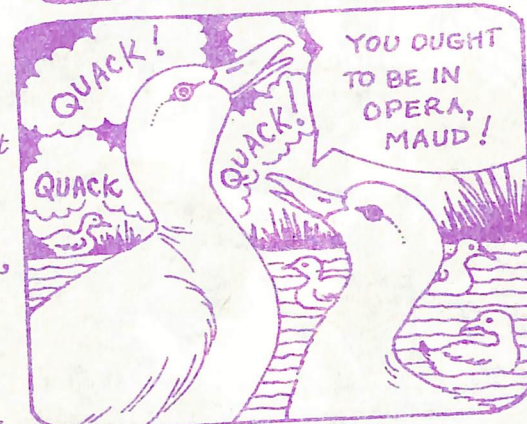


Not all ducks live on farms or in gardens, of course. There are many different looking sorts. Mallard ducks have beaks specially made for feeding just below the surface of the water. The huge beak of the Shoveller is built for 'dabbling' on the top of the water. Sawbill ducks, who eat fish, have rows of points (like a saw) on the edges of their beaks. With these, they catch and hold their food.

It's pretty hard for a duck to drown! To help them float, ducks have hollow bones-sort of like a built-in life jacket. Their breast-bones are shaped just like the bottom of a boat, to help them glide easily through the water. Their big toes are joined by flaps of skin called WEBS. These are used like paddles for swimming. Next summer, try on a pair of flip-flops when you are swimming. You will soon see what a big difference the paddle shape makes.



Have you ever tried walking in the mud in bare feet? What happens? Being water birds, ducks come across quite a bit of mud. Their webbed feet stops them from sinking.



Male ducks are called DRAKES, while the females are just called DUCKS- yes, it's confusing, isn't it? Like many other animals, the male is brightly colored and the female is quite dull looking. But to make up for her boring appearance, female the female duck has a better voice. Only she is able to give that loud "quack" noise we know.



Every year, ducks lose their feathers and grow new ones. This is called MOULTING and takes about 4 months. When drakes moult, they lose their bright plumage and look just like the females. Females begin to moult about one month later than males. For part of the moulting time, ducks are unable to fly.

THIS MONTH'S FEED COVER THANKS TO CATHY PHILIP

Wally says-
"THANKS TO ALL THE
CHILDREN AT
LUCINDALE AREA
SCHOOL WHO SENT
IN THE HUGE
PACKET OF 'PET
POEMS' FOR THIS
MONTH'S
ISSUE."

By Natasha Macdonald
grade 5 age 9
My Horse Called
Cutie
Lucindale Area School

Cutie canters carefully,
While we watch fearfully
But she does her duty
CUTIE IS A BEAUTY.

Tuff

Tuff is my bun's name,
He is always ready for a game,
The only thing wrong with Tuff
Is when he gets burrs in his fluff.

by Julie-
Ann Crawford

This is my Pet Bunny
Tuff.

MY Horsies

My horsies are rather fat,
And don't mind a little fat,
We always give my Horsies Bales,
When we try to cut that nails,
Anna young

Y-8 Lucindale Area School

Teb's
Crunch, Crunch, Crunch
goes Teb's when she
eats her lunch.

Slurp, Slurp, Slurp
goes Teb's when
she drinks her
milk.

Purr, Purr, Purr
goes Teb's proud
of her coat of
Purr.

PETS ON PAPER

LOOK AT THE 'PET DAY' HELD AT RINGWOOD EAST PRIMARY ON THE 21ST JULY



HAVE YOU GOT A
PET LIKE
ONE OF
THESE?

BY M. ROBERTS
(AND THE PETS
AT RINGWOOD
EAST!)

A MOST PURR...FECT PET

As well as spraying, cats mark everything in their home by rubbing a special cat oil on them. Pet cats 'mark' their humans, their furniture and even their cans of cat food. The oil comes from special glands near pussy's mouth, ears and tail and, like a label, says to other cats, "THIS BELONGS TO ME!"



Plump, soft toys like a thick woolly sock (or your hand) trigger off the need to fight. As it pounces on the sock, it feels it rubbing against its belly—not the place a cat would want a sharp-clawed rat to be!



WATCH THE DIFFERENT STEPS A CAT USES IN HUNTING. TWITCHING, THEN LETTING A PAPER BALL STAY STILL, THEN TWITCHING IT AGAIN WILL LET YOU SEE THESE STEPS

A CAT'S WHISKERS ALSO HELP IT TO WORK OUT WHETHER OR NOT IT CAN FIT THROUGH A TIGHT SPACE OR WHICH WAY THE WIND IS BLOWING.



Cat's eyes are like bicycle reflectors. Even when you can't see the cat, you can see its reflecting eyes.



IN A DARK ROOM, SHINE A TORCH INTO A CAT'S EYES AND A HUMAN'S EYES. WHICH ARE THE EASIEST TO SEE?



Cats were first DOMESTICATED in Egypt thousands of years ago. Even so, your cuddly pussy keeps up many of the old habits of cats when they lived in the wild. In the wild, one cat lived alone on its own part of land. It made sure other cats knew whose land was whose.

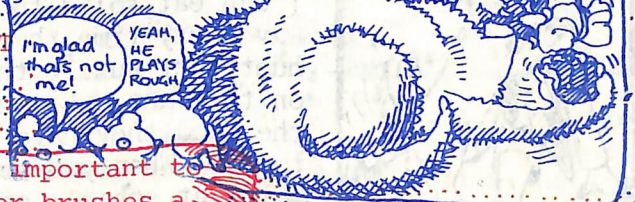


TODAY'S CATS MARK OUT AN INVISIBLE FENCE AROUND THEIR HOME BY SPRAYING IT WITH A SPECIAL SCENT MADE BY THEIR BODIES.



CATS ARE GREAT PETS BUT THEY ARE A DANGER TO NATIVE BIRDS. CAN YOU SUGGEST SOME WAYS TO STOP 'PUSSY' FROM HAVING (WHAT HE SEES AS) A GREAT GAME WITH HIS FEATHERED FRIENDS?

Kitten play is hunting practice. Crumpled paper on a string is a favorite toy because it is very much like the sound of a mouse or a bird in dry grass or leaves.



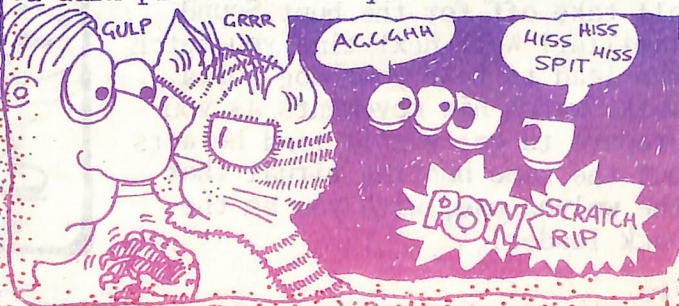
The cat's whiskers are very important to it. When a twig or other danger brushes a cat's whiskers, it blinks its eyes—protecting them from damage.



YOU CAN SEE 'WHISKER DEFENCE' FOR YOURSELF BY (CAREFULLY) USING A PENCIL OR FINGERTIP TO LIGHTLY BRUSH AGAINST YOUR PET'S WHISKERS. WHAT HAPPENS?



Look at the pupils of a cat's eyes outside on a sunny day and then at night in a dark place. What do you notice?



Bowing and nuzzling are two ways wild dogs greet each other.

(their friends that is)

Does your dog greet its friends (you

THE GRRR-EATEST

From the time a dog is born, it acts in ways it would have had it been born in the wild. As your puppy grows up as the family pet, it will still act in ways that it would have in the wild. This behaviour is called instinct.



In the wild, wolves behave in the same way as the dogs we keep as pets do. The young pups from the time that they are weaned, (can eat solid food) behave in a certain way every time the pack come in from the hunt. They nuzzle the adults who have been on the hunt, who then regurgitate some of the food they have caught, for the pup to eat. When you see your pup next, after being at school, see how he greets you. You'll find he acts the same, and expects food, as the wolf pups do!

When it's time to go hunting in the wild, the wolves get really excited and follow a special pattern of behaviour. The wolves bow, bounce up and bow again to their leader. They then dash in circles around the leader and nuzzle each other. They repeat this, until they are really in a frenzy, and their circles are quite large. Then, at a given signal by the leader, they all take off for the hunt. Sound familiar? Well next time you fetch the lead to take your dog for a walk, watch his movements as you prepare to go; you'll find he acts out the same hunting ritual that the wolves use, with you as the pack leader!



PET!

A LOOK AT DOGS AND HOW THEY BEHAVE -

Other behaviour that is common to all dogs are the 'rules' that they have, especially about fighting. In a dog fight, the dogs always know that a bite on the neck is the most dangerous one. If, in the middle of a fight, a dog sinks his teeth into his opponent's neck, that dog will suddenly stand very still with its head hanging limply. This is the signal to say "I give up, you are the winner" and the other dog will take its teeth out. Lying on the back is also another way of saying "I give up" in a fight.



If a dog lies on its back it is a sign of fear- of another dog or a person. It is a dog's most defenceless position- he's saying 'Don't hurt me'. Of course, we all have seen the family pet roll over to say 'Scratch me' but this is done in trust, not in defence.

Often you may find an older dog teaching a pup to fight in a playful way. The older dog will nip at the pup's legs and neck, showing it how enemies may attack it. He will also let the pup bite him, and teach the 'rules' of fights to the pup.



Who do you think a dog would respond to best- the person that feeds it or the person that trains it and disciplines it? Think about this for a moment. The answer is at the bottom of the page.



BY: CAROL MEASURES
W. PROHASKY
M. ROBERTS

THE PERSON WHO TRAINS IT.

THIS 'N' THAT

THE SKY ISN'T BLUE AND
BUTTER ISN'T YELLOW!

Well, not to a dog, anyway. You can blame a part of his brain called the NEOCORTEX for this mess up. This is the part of a dog's brain (and ours) that sorts out what it sees and what it doesn't. Now I know that many of you are dog lovers but you must admit that they haven't got much up front. Look at the shape of a dog's forehead. You will see that it is has quite a different shape to yours. Because dogs don't have a very large NEO-CORTEX, it's likely that they can't work out much about what is going on around them by just looking at it. This is why dogs often bark at members of their own family when they see them at a distance. What sense does a dog use to work out what is going on? Can

humans see every color and object around them? Perhaps you could read about the exciting discovery of the X-Ray. Why was it so important to doctors?



IS YOUR DOG A HEART THROB?

How many times does your heart beat every minute? One way of finding out is to take your own pulse. You'll need a stopwatch to get the exact answer, of course. Your pulse is a light 'beating' feeling which tells you how fast your heart is beating. The easiest place to find this 'beating' feeling is on your neck (see the above picture). Does your pulse change if you exercise before taking it?

A dog's heartbeat ranges from 72 to 100 every minute. The hearts of smaller dogs beat much

faster than their larger brothers. The best way to take a dog's pulse is to press your fingers against the inner, fleshy side of the hind leg, well above the knee.

IT'S NO GAME!

Wolves and dogs kill small animals, like rabbits by fiercely shaking them until their necks break. The common puppy game you may have thought of as "Tug-of-War" is not just a way for a playful puppy to have fun. In fact, it's serious training for adulthood when the puppy-then a dog-will have to kill his own food-or starve. We all know that pet dogs don't usually have this problem but this doesn't mean that their instincts are any weaker.



Knot a hand towel to make



a nice, limp "rabbit". When your puppy grabs hold, let it do the shaking while you hold on tight. Move the toy back and forth a little to keep the game interesting. When your pup lets go for a moment, toss the toy a few metres away to encourage it to learn the game of fetch.

HAIRLESS AND TOOTHLESS

(well, almost) Humans have been breeding dogs for centuries. Dogs have been helped by man to have puppies with longer noses, shorter tails, stumpy legs or (even worse) pushed-in faces. Sometimes this has been done for a good reason, sometimes just for fashion. This does not always work out so well for the dogs themselves. Many of the 'hairless' breeds of dogs are often born with all of their teeth missing except the front ones. Bad luck, eh!

ABOUT DOGS

ARTIST: Carol Measures

THIS IS CARRYING THINGS TOO FAR!



KEEPING FROGS AS

THE HISTORY OF FROGS

There were frogs on Earth long before there were human beings. Unlike many other animals (including us) frogs have changed very little over the last 150 million years. During this time, many animals left the water for good. Their bodies changed so that they could live and have their babies on land. Lizards, for example, were animals whose bodies had been 'changed around' so that their babies were born in hard shelled eggs. These did not dry out and die like the frog's 'jelly bag' eggs when waterholes dried up.

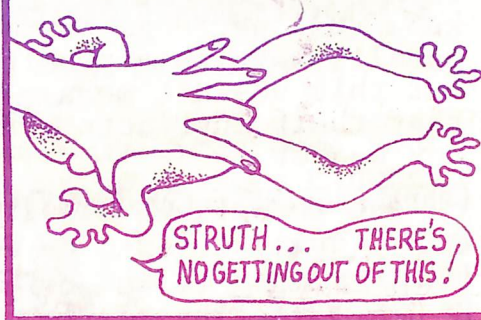
AT HOME IN TWO WORLDS

Frogs never really made up their mind to leave the water. They are at home in two worlds- in the water and on the land. The problem is that they can't spend too long in either place. Frogs' skin is soft and bare, without hair or scales, so that air can get through. It is cold and wet-clammy is a good word to describe its feel. It is important for a frog to keep his skin like this, because he never drinks. All the water and half the air he needs is soaked up through his skin. This is why it is so important not to let frogs dry out. Frogs are members of the 'amphibia' family of animals. What are the names of the other families?

If you have never kept frogs before, you will have to find out as much as possible about your particular frog before you start to build him a home and



Hold a frog like this to prevent escape.



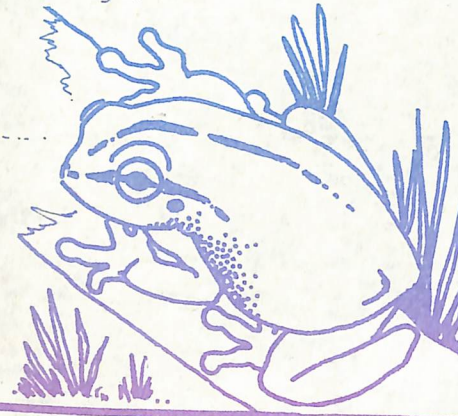
Tree-frogs have special suction pads on the tips of their fingers...



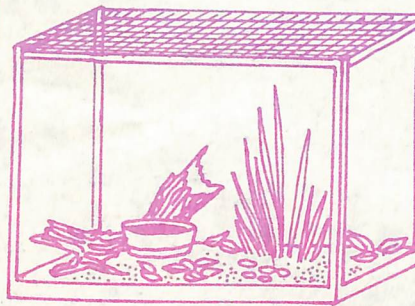
...for holding onto branches.

PETS... What a ~~joke~~ croak!

Frogs have no necks, so they can't turn their head to look sideways.



A comfortable home is a must.



Frogs never close their eyes, even when asleep.

Z.zzzz...



begin feeding him. There are many different sorts of Australian frogs. Probably you will have to look up a proper reference book in the library if you want to know your frog's correct name. Then check with wildlife authorities in your state to find out whether it is legal to keep your particular sort.

IS YOUR FROG IN THE PINK OF HEALTH?

Most frogs do not like being handled and should jump or move away when you try to touch them. Check that your frog does not have the common frog disease- 'Red-leg', which shows as reddish patches on the inside of the thighs. This can be difficult to get rid of and is contagious.

A BOY OR A GIRL?

With frogs, this is very hard to tell. However, if your frog is a keen croaker, he's probably a boy. Females are often silent. A shower of rain will often cause a male to start calling.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

An ordinary glass aquarium is suitable for most Australian frogs, except tree frogs. This home should have a 'carpet' of leaf litter or moss (or sand and loose soil for frogs found in drier areas). A plant pot or piece of bark should be sunk half-way into this 'carpet' as a hiding place. Living plants should be planted, if possible- but are absolutely necessary for tree frogs who will need branches and vines. Sink a shallow dish of water into the floor cover and spray the whole case lightly from time to time. P.14

KEEPING FROGS AS PETS (cont.)

Some sort of drainage system may help to prevent the tank from becoming water-logged. The temperature should not be hotter than 28 degrees Celsius. Some form of heating may be necessary in the winter. Frogs, unlike mammals, are 'cold-blooded' -this means that they are unable to heat up their own bodies. They have to rely on outside heaters: in the wild, this is the sun. One of the most common ways of providing heating for small animals is by suspending an ordinary 100 watt light globe in or near one end of the tank (well away from water of course).

KEEP IT CLEAN

Your frog home must be escape proof. Fly wire netting makes a good roof for your frog home because it lets the air move freely through the cage. This helps to prevent fungus diseases. Water in the tank should always be clean and kept free from algae. Remove any rotting food, rubbish etc. with a pair of tongs or a kitchen scoop. A large stainless steel soup ladle would be useful for the changing of water.

THE MENU

Most frogs will only feed on moving prey, such as insects and worms. Soft bodied ones are more popular. It is possible to catch enough, especially during the summer months by using a simple trap at night.

The circle of thin, dark skin behind each eye is the frog's ear drum.

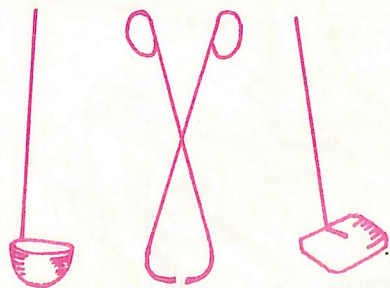


Hang a light globe over a large funnel which leads into a large collecting jar. The insects will be attracted by the light and fall into the jar via the tunnel. Like humans, frogs enjoy a change in their diet so try to vary it as much as possible.

MATES OR MEALS?

Remember, don't put frogs greatly differing in size in the same tank. The smaller ones could be eaten.

A WARNING: REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS PROPERLY AFTER HANDLING YOUR 'CROAKERS'.



Cage cleaning equipment.