

# NATURE NOTES

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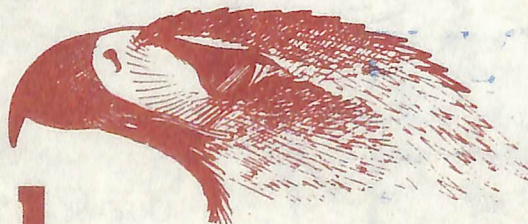


# EDITORIAL

Hello there, This month "Nature Notes" is looking up. Last month we looked at life underground so this month we're having a special issue on 'fliers'. Most flying animals are birds. These are animals whose bodies have been specially designed to suit their flying ability. Birds live just about everywhere on our Earth. They are often designed to live in a particular HABITAT, such as the ocean, lakes or deserts. Look at the different bird beaks on this page. Why do you think they are different? Perhaps you could make a study on the different feet of various birds. How many different types of feet can you discover? What does a bird's feet tell you about its lifestyle and diet? There are many fascinating projects you can do about birds. Perhaps you could make a survey concerning the different species that visit your schoolyard at various times of the year. What sort of things could you observe and how would you record the information? Anyway, I'll have to be off to repair all the damage Wilbur and Wally did to themselves in their attempt this month to soar with the eagles. When will they ever learn?

Cheerio for now,  
DEBRA BRYDON

P.S. Write to the Gould League, P.O. Box 446, Prahran, Vic. for their fantastic bird posters.



# WALLY & WILBUR WAFFLE ON...

WALLY, I WISH I COULD FLY LIKE THAT EAGLE.

WILBUR, WOMBATS HAVEN'T GOT WHAT IT TAKES.

FIRSTLY YOU NEED HOLLOW BONES, SO YOU'RE VERY LIGHT

THEN YOU NEED FEATHERS SHAPED IN A SPECIAL WAY TO MAKE THE AIR GO OVER THEM

JUST LIKE SPAGHETTI WAF?!

YOU NEED A FAST, HARD WORKING BODY TO BE ABLE TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO FLY

LIKE A JET WING?

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY YOU NEED WINGS, NATURE'S SPECIALLY DEVELOPED FLYING MECHANISM.

BIRD GYM.

MEMBERS ONLY.

KEEP AND FIT. FLY.

HAVING A WORK OUT JOHN?

YOU'D HAVE TO EAT LOTS TOO HEY!

EASY WAL!

WILBUR! WOMBATS AREN'T MADE TO FLY!!!

SOME WOMBATS NEVER LISTEN!



HOME SWEET HOME...THE  
TALE OF A HOMELESS EGG  
AND A HOPELESS MOTHER...

Hi! I'm Kathy  
Koel and I'm in a  
spot of bother. I'm  
a cuckoo  
you...



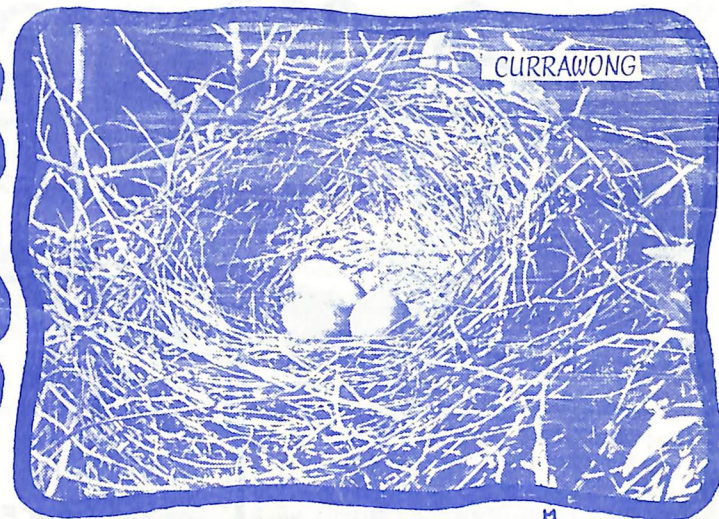
FAIRY MARTIN



...that nest of  
the western yellow  
robin is so well  
camouflaged. Those  
pieces of bark  
hanging vertically  
from the nest  
really make it  
look like part of  
the tree trunk.  
Hmm...yet  
that cup-



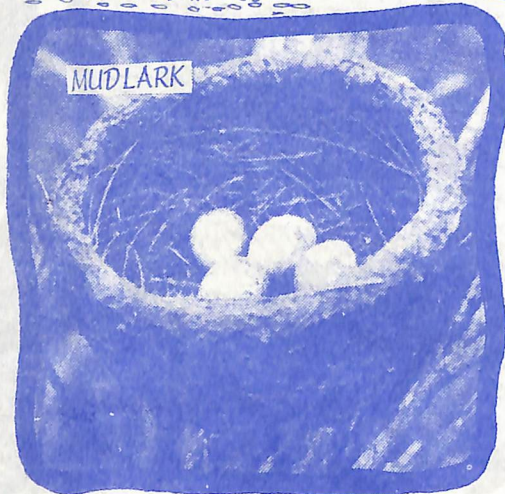
CURRAWONG



-shaped  
stick nest of  
the Currawong  
looks much  
stronger.



MUDLARK



...see. Cuckoos don't  
build their own nests  
but lay their eggs in  
the nests of other birds.  
My problem is choosing  
which nest would be best  
my precious egg. Perhaps  
the bottle-shaped mud  
nest of the Fairy..

REED WARBLER



Some babies  
do have  
em!



On the other  
hand, that deep-  
cup shaped nest  
of the Reed Warbler  
has an excellent  
view of the water.  
Yet, it could get  
a bit chilly. That  
nest of the pale  
rosella there, in  
that tree hollow  
must be great on a  
cold night....

WESTERN YELLOW ROBIN



...Martin would  
do. Or perhaps the mud and  
grass 'pudding' nest of the  
Mudlark (or Peewee)  
would be cosier  
with its luxury  
lining of grass  
and feathers.

On the other hand...



PALE ROSELLA

by D. Brydon

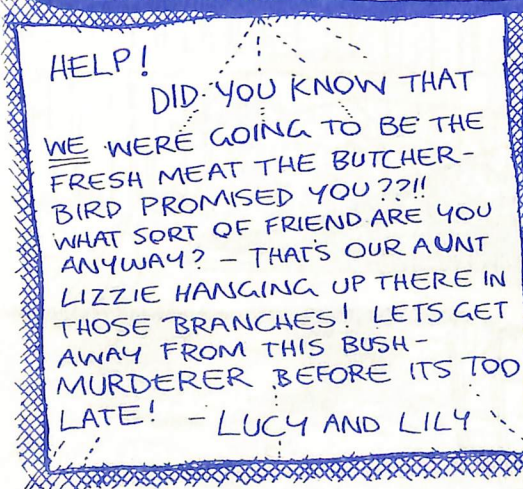




# Hairy Bungle and the Lowland Sisters

BY D. BRYDON... ARTIST: Cindy Humman

TREKKING ACROSS THE COUNTRY SIDE, OUR FAMOUS AUSTRALIAN NATURALIST **HAIRY BUNGLER** IS JOINED BY THOSE OTHER FAMOUS NATURALISTS, **THE LOWLAND SISTERS** IN AN UNENDING QUEST TO SOLVE THE MANY MYSTERIES OF NATURE. AFTER THE EMBARRASSED TRIO HAVE RETURNED THE UNWANTED "CRICKET" BATS TO THEIR CAVE IN THE BUSH, THEY STUMBLE ACROSS A STRANGE SIGN ON A TREE....



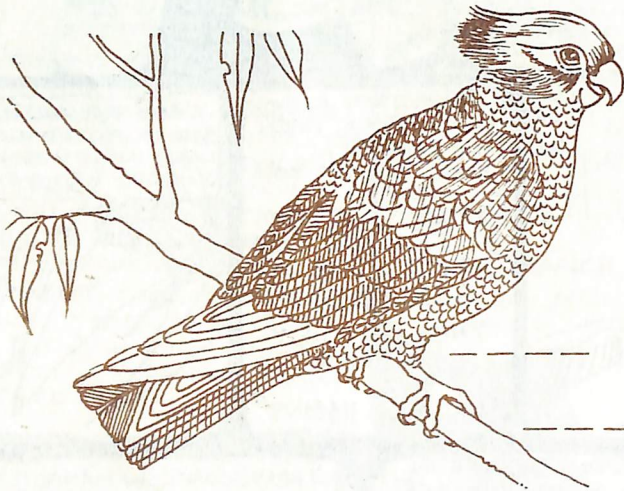


\*I have a 'wheezy' voice, like a squeaky door.

\*I am a slow flier.

\*Males of my species have a red crest.

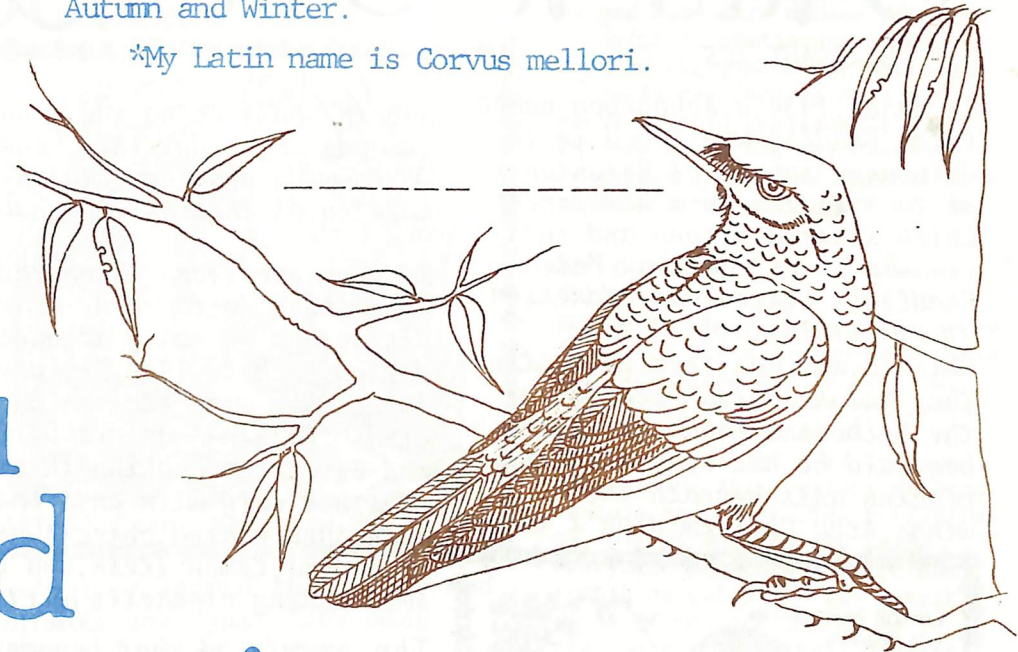
\*My Latin name is Callocephalon fimbriatum.



\*I am always given the wrong name of 'crow'.

\*I am nomadic in summer but return to my breeding grounds in Autumn and Winter.

\*My Latin name is Corvus mellori.

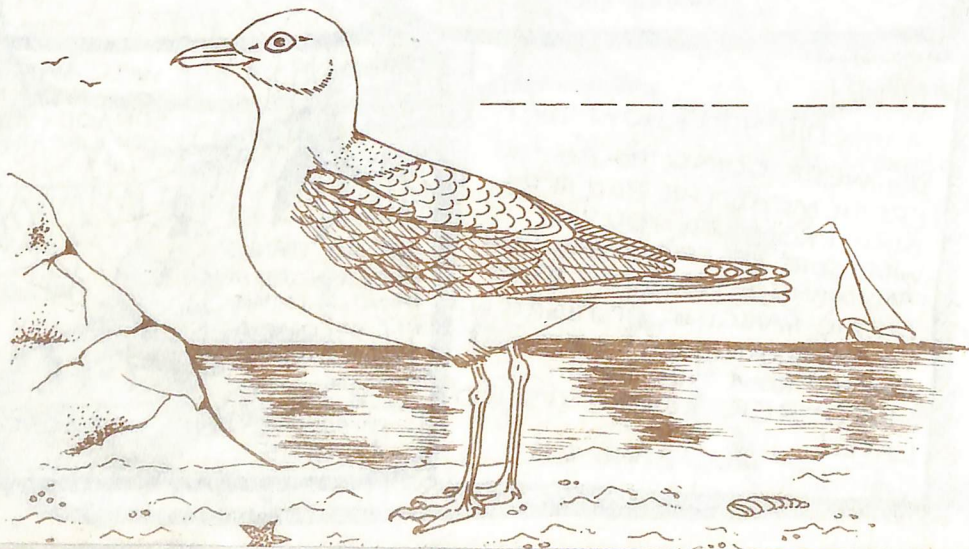


# be a bird detective

\*I am commonly found by the sea but I also hang about in rubbish tips, sports grounds and school grounds.

\*Males and females of my species look alike.

\*My eggs are stone-coloured, with brown or purple blotches.

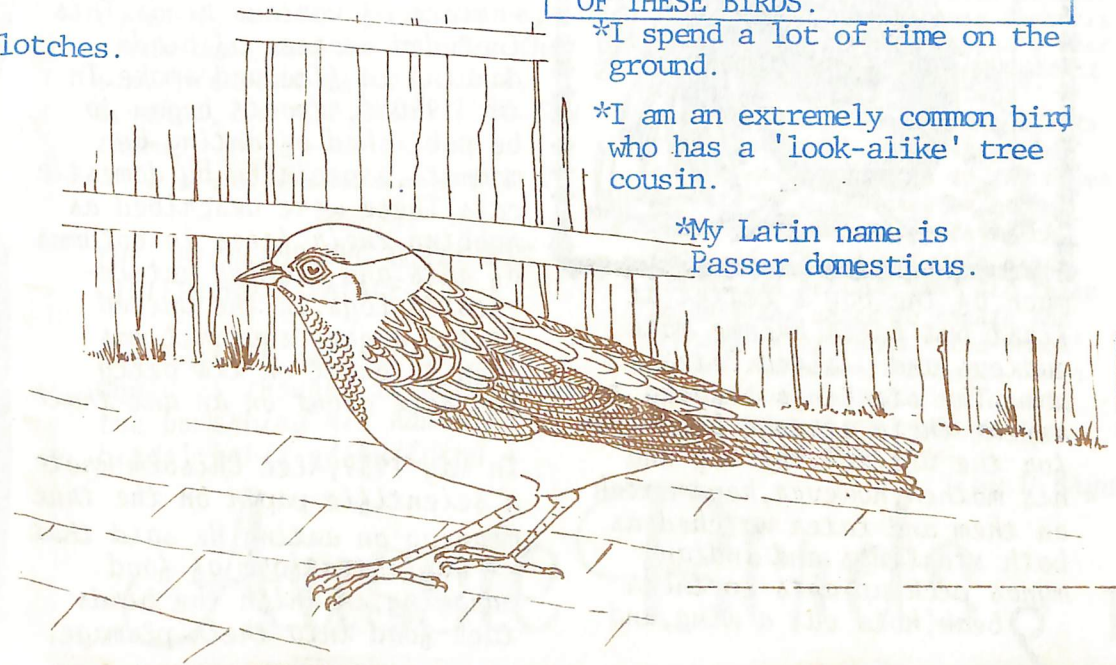


USE THE GOULD LEAGUE BOOK  
"BIRDS OF VICTORIA-URBAN AREAS"  
TO FIND THE NAMES AND COLOURS  
OF THESE BIRDS.

\*I spend a lot of time on the ground.

\*I am an extremely common bird who has a 'look-alike' tree cousin.

\*My Latin name is  
Passer domesticus.





# This 'n' That About...

## BIRD ANT-ICS

In March, 1934, a schoolboy named Peter Bradley who lived in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton wrote a letter to a newspaper which started a long and intriguing investigation. Peter Bradley's letter was addressed to the ORTHINOLOGIST, Alec Chisolm, who was then conducting the 'Nature Notes' section of the Melbourne Argus. In it, the boy said he had seen starlings placing ants beneath their wings. Alec Chisolm didn't think

WATCH OUT GANG  
OR YOU'LL  
END UP AS  
DEODORANT.



much of the boy's letter at first but later became more curious and visited Peter's home. The starlings refused to repeat their strange behaviour for the visitor. The boy and his mother, however, kept watch on them and later watched as both starlings and Indian mynas pick up ants in their beak, hold out a wing, and

rub the ants along the wing towards the body. This began a world-wide enquiry into the meaning of this strange habit.

Some observations which had never been followed up were discovered in early records, dating back to 1909. Included among them were stories of birds 'bathing' on ant hills and of others rubbing themselves not only with ants but with such varied objects as mealworms, lemon flesh, and even smouldering cigarette butts.

The puzzle of what became known as 'anting' spread all around the world. Many more reports were published of birds anting with burning materials of various kinds. This included stories of birds dancing in fire and smoke. In the 1950's, reports began to be published of anting by mammals, especially by domestic cats. These were described as rubbing their faces in columns of ants and licking ant-infested logs. In the United States, a grey squirrel was seen to crawl on its belly and roll about on an ant-trail.

In May 1959, Alec Chisolm wrote a scientific paper on the true meaning on anting. He said that it was not a form of food carrying, in which the birds tuck food into their plumage.



ARTIST: Carol Measures

Rather, it seemed that birds and animals are just like many humans. Just as we like applying soothing lotions or tingly after shave perfumes, so these animals enjoy splashing the formic acid from ants onto their skin. Other types of anting, using smoke, steam dust and water have the same pleasant effect...but, somehow, I don't think I'll try them.

\*\*\*\*\*

### THE BACHELOR WHO BUILT HIS GIRLFRIEND A PALACE...

The English naturalist John Gould is thought to have given the bowerbird his name. The birds' habit of building a

avenue of upright sticks and grass is unique in the bird world. The Satin bowerbird's bower is formed of two parallel and sturdy walls of twigs, firmly wedged down into a base platform of twigs or coarse grass laid down on the ground. The walls are 25 to 35 centimetres high and about 8 to 10 centimetres thick. The two walls are set about 15 centimetres apart at the base but curve towards each other at the top.

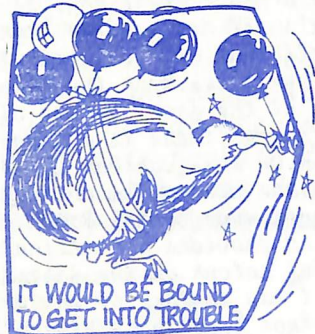
All this effort on the part of the male bowerbird is not to provide a place where eggs can be laid. It's all designed to impress his girlfriend and to keep out any other males. Near the bower, usually at the front of one of the entrances, there is a large platform. On this, various display objects are placed. The collection of objects made by the Satin bowerbird provides a brilliant splash of colour on the forest floor. It may contain 60 to 70 blue parrot's feathers, bluebells, blue flowers from gardens, pieces of blue glass, blue patterned crockery, rags, paper, bus tickets, chocolate wrappers and in recent times, objects made of blue plastic such as biro caps. Because there is so much blue in a bowerbird's nest a common belief has grown up that the bird collects only blue objects. This is incorrect. Objects of a particular greenish-yellow colour are also added to the bower as well as a few grey or brown ones. Since these colours match those of other rival male birds, scientists believe that all these colours are added to create the impression of extra 'bird-power' around the bower. The Satin bowerbird's beak and eyes are a dull blue colour, which explains the choice of so much blue.

by D. Brydon

# Aussie Birds



# KIWIS...



\*What prevents the Kiwi from flying, do you think? How would its body have to change so that he could?



\*Find New Zealand on a world map.



\*How heavy is a hen's egg?



\*Name 3 ways in which the Kiwi is different to other birds.

The Kiwi is MYOPIC. What does this mean?





# BIRDWATCHING IN THE

With the coming of Spring, you may have noticed a lot more birds around the school-ground.

An idea I had for the children in my grade some years ago was to go for a walk around the school and observe the birds. It shouldn't take very long, but it may be very worthwhile. However you do need to be alert and observe carefully. I generally take a notebook along just to jot down anything new I notice; especially in relation to new and unusual birds.



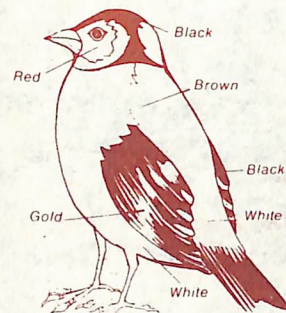
If you see any bird you don't know, write a brief description of it in your notebook. This should include:

- color of feathers,
- color and shape of beak,
- color of legs,
- what it was doing,
- its call and its flight.

When I return to my room, I refer to the GOULD LEAGUE GUIDES, Volumes 1 and 2. These two books are a good guide to the Birds generally found around our school. However, they may not suit your school's location. You may need one of the other guides. There are 6 in the set and most school libraries have copies of them.

# SCHOOL GROUND

As you continue your Birdwatching Activities, keep a record of your sightings. Over a period of 5 years, the children and teachers have built up quite a comprehensive list of birds sighted within our school boundaries. The total is now 53 species.



Draw a picture of any bird you do not recognise. Note the shape of its beak, and the colours of its plumage. Later on, you can look the bird up in an identification book.

Maybe you could start a "Birdwatchers" Club at your school and build up a list of Feathered Visitors. You could keep this list in the Library so that it can be kept for future generations of school children.

Maybe someone has already done this. If so, compare your list with the old list. Has the list changed? If it has changed can you think why it may of changed?

Consider the future. Will a list you compile this year be the same in 5-10 years time? Why? How can you ensure that future generations will be able to view all our native birds?



SCHOOL

BIRD

WALK.



With the help of your teacher plan a track around your school. Along this track you can put signs as to what birds you are likely to see. A member of your grade could wander around the track regularly so a that a record can be built up of the school bird life. It may be even possible to build feeding stations in the quieter areas of your schoolground. In this way you may attract other birds to frequent the schoolground.

## OTHER USEFUL REFERENCES:

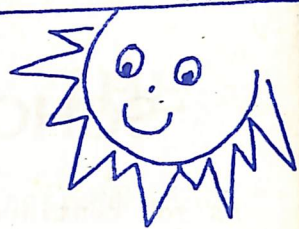
Passerines and Non Passerines, both by Peter SLATER.  
Readers' Digest, Complete Book of Australian Birds.  
Every Australian Bird Illustrated, Rigby Australia.



CATHERINE MULLIN FROM THE "Victorian State  
Schools' Nursery looks at the  
dirt beneath our feet...

down

under



We clay  
particles stick  
together to  
hold water  
and nutrients

my sandy  
friends let the  
water swoosh  
through us.

Hi! I'm  
"air" and I  
live in pockets  
between the  
soil particles

I'm an  
old banana  
skin and I help  
make good  
Compost.

I love to  
eat compost  
and make  
it into  
fertilizer

We were made  
in a fertilizer  
factory and  
added to the  
soil.

I'm all  
rock!