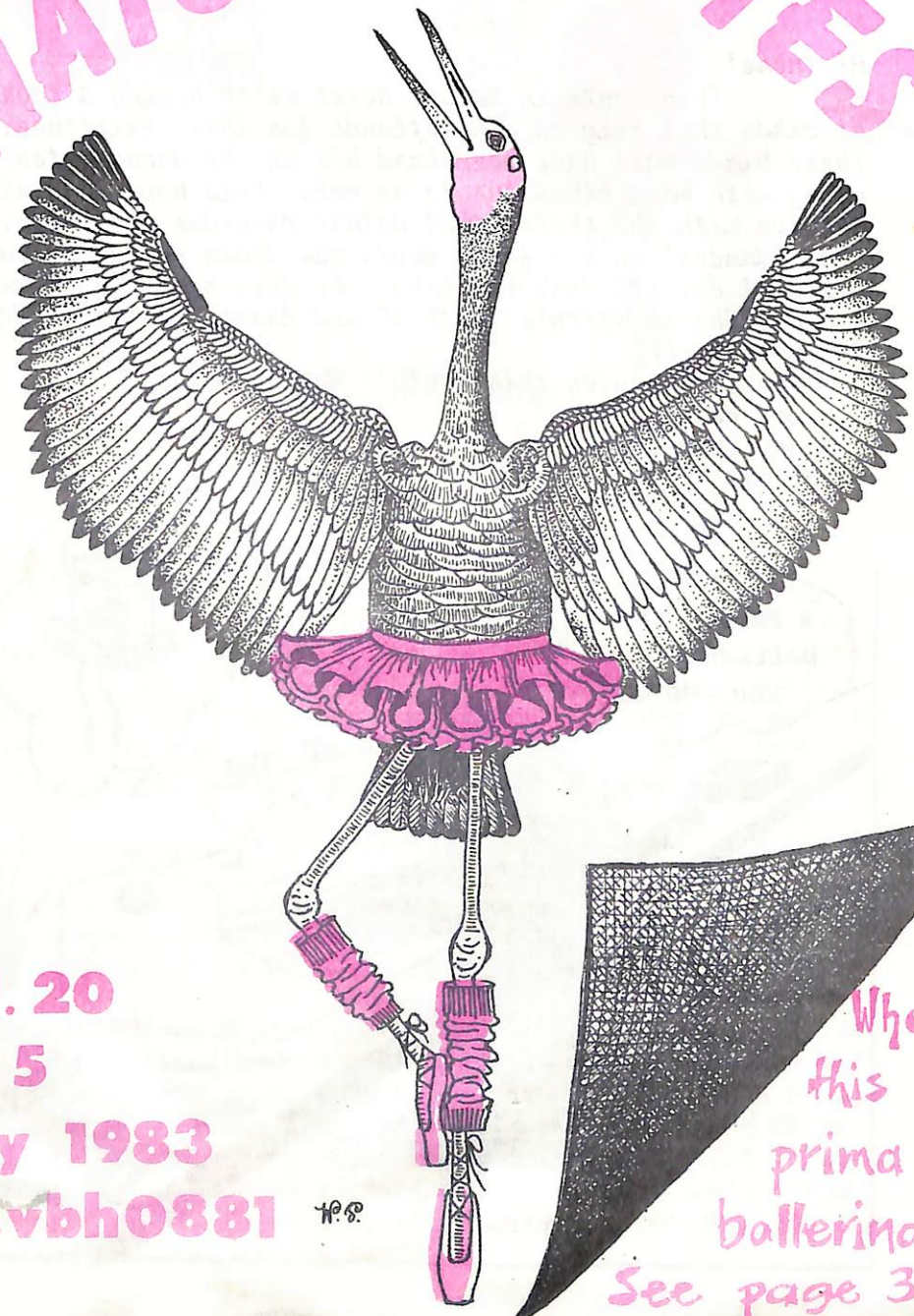
NATURE NOTES



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Who's this prima ballerina? See page 3!

ED'S PAGE —

Hi there!

This month in Nature Notes we're having a look at birds that rely on our wetlands for their existence. These birds must have been hard hit by the drought too, along with many other Aussie animals. Lets hope they all survive with the skills that nature provides them with.

The 'dancer' on our front cover was drawn for us by our resident artist, Mrs. Prohasky, who does heaps of drawings for us. She is Wally's "mother" and draws all our Wallys for us as well.

We hope you enjoy this month's Nature Notes,
Happy Reading
Mandy Carmichael
Editor.

brolga

The tall and slender Brolga, also called the Native Companion, is Australia's only true crane. An Aboriginal legend tells that Bralgah was a young and pretty girl who was turned into a bird because she was always dancing instead of working. She was supposed to have kept her own height and slenderness and love of dancing, which Brolgas have been famous for ever since!

Whole flocks of Brolgas join in complicated dance movements, which are copied by the Aborigines in their dancing. A dance usually begins with one bird picking up a single twig and tossing it into the air. Then the birds begin to dip their heads and flap their wings. This dipping and flapping continues until the birds actually rise a metre or more into the air, and float gracefully back to the ground. They are said to look like a grassland ballet troup when they really get into the swing of things!

Brolgas are protected in Queensland, where their greatest numbers live. They are found near swamps, on grassy plains and even in forests and salt water lagoons. They eat grass, roots, insects, frogs, molluscs and small reptiles. They are also known to have taken a liking to a few of the different crops farmers grow.

The Brolga has pale grey feathers, a long straight bill, dark legs, yellow irises, and an unusual head which is covered with rough orange or red skin. They have a bare top of their head, which is grey. They can stand up to 1½ metres high and weigh up to 6½ kg. One pair of Brolgas in captivity lived for 33 years. John Macarthur, a pioneer of Australia's wool industry, had 2 Brolgas at Camden Park, N.S.W. which were so friendly that they came inside and were fed by hand!

water birds

Cattle egrets are often seen walking amongst grazing cattle, feeding on insects that the cattle disturb with their feet. Sometimes they are even seen perched on the backs of cattle, feeding on insects that live there! They often nest with other water birds, such as ibises, herons and other egrets.

The royal spoonbill feeds on fish, crustaceans and insects living on plants. Its strange spoon shaped bill is moved through the water from side to side, searching for food. The prey is grasped by the tip of the bill and flicked backwards into the spoonbill's mouth.

The jabiru is sometimes called the black necked stork. It lives along the northern and eastern coasts of Australia, as far south as Sydney. They eat fish, reptiles, frogs and crabs. The female has yellow eyes, whilst the male has brown eyes.

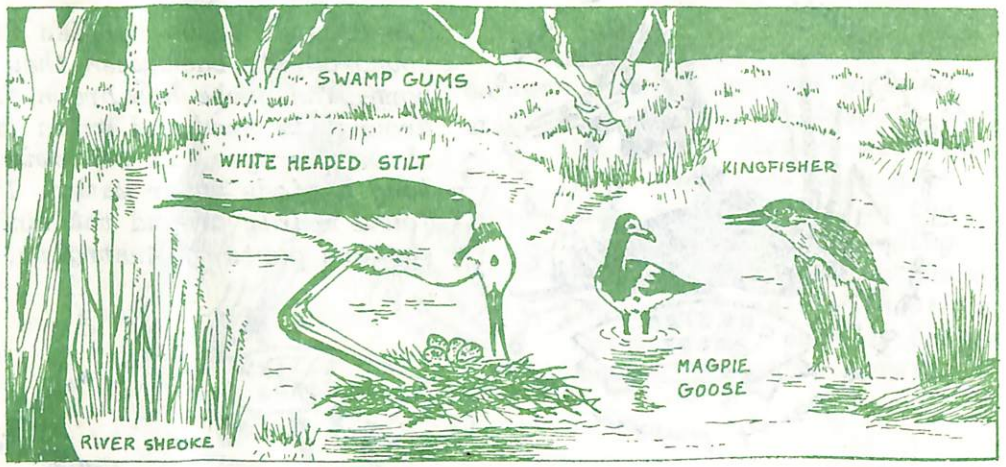
in focus.

The crested grebe carries its young on its back when they are born. The grebe has brown frills around its head and extra frills above its eyes. It can swim for long periods under water. It is found mainly around the south eastern parts of Australia.

The sharp tailed sand piper migrates from northern Siberia to Australia every August. They like the coastal and inland swamps of Australia to spend their winters in, and eat tiny crustaceans, molluscs and insects.

These are the most common ibises found in Australia, and they have been known to breed in colonies of up to 20,000 birds!! They live in swamps, pastures and sea shores around Australia, and feed on molluscs water insects, frogs and snakes as well as the odd grasshopper.

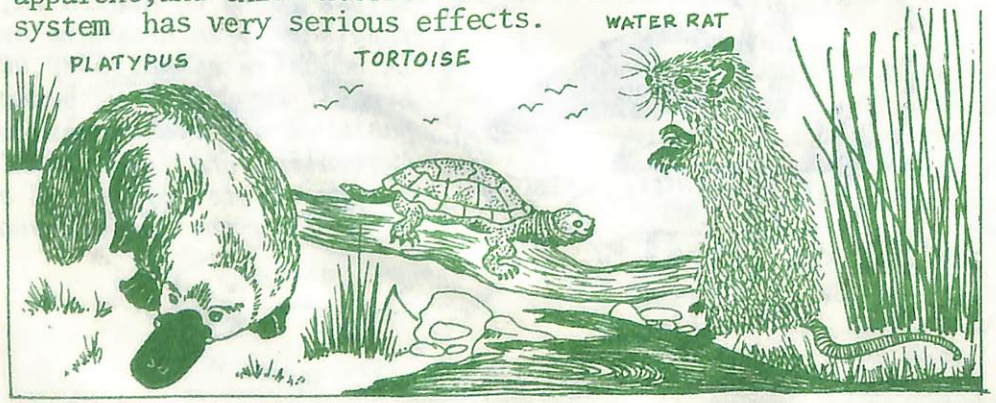
WITHERING



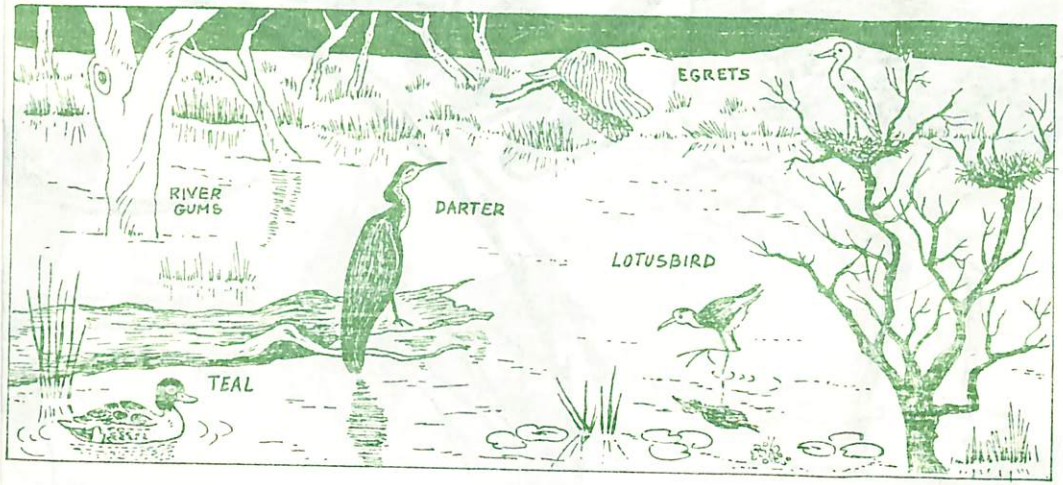
A wetland is a waterlogged area, that is covered by water usually not more than 30cm in depth. They are places too wet to use as grazing land or crops, and are found all over Australia. They can be near sand dunes, or at the edge of an inland stream or river. Wetlands are important as they support a wide variety of birds, plants and animals.

Wetlands are important areas to man as well, because they help control floods, and erosion, they provide recreational , educational and scientific research areas, and they are the nursery for many smaller fish and crustaceans.

The results of filling in wetlands to make dry ground for factories or farmers, can take many years to become apparent,and this interference with nature's drainage system has very serious effects.

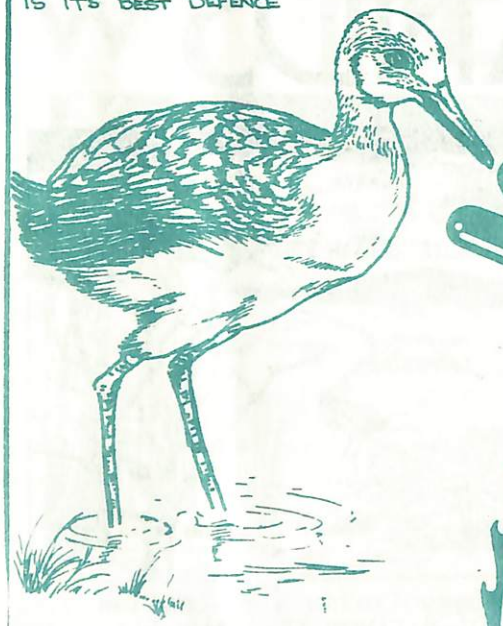


WETLANDS

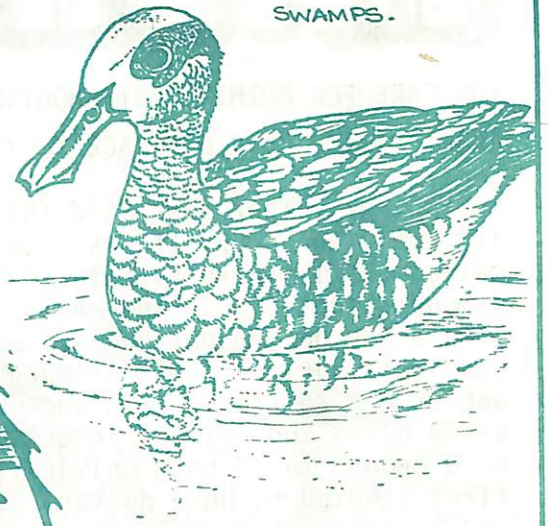


If a bog or a swamp near the start of a river is drained then the river will flow faster, as it is getting all the water that would have stayed in the wetland. This means that if there were very heavy rain, the river's banks would flood more easily. This might mean that levee banks would have to be built to stop flooding into farmers' land, and with more water rushing down the river, this would lead to more erosion which in turn leads to the mouth of the river silting up. Draining a wetland is not as simple as it looks, is it!When wetlands are changed, the delicate balance of nature is disturbed, and plants and birds become rare, that were once numerous. This has happened at Lake Pedder in Tasmania, and is in danger of happening at Bool lagoon in South Australia. The biggest wetland area in Australia is that found in the south, along the banks of the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, Macquarie, Gwydir, Bogan, Paroo ,Bulloo and Darling rivers. The water birds need flooding to tell them when to breed, and to replenish their lagoons. Too many dams, levee banks and irrigation systems destroy their place of living, so that they too will eventually be destroyed.

WATER BIRDS



CHESTNUT RAIL. FOUND IN MANGROVES. RUNNING RATHER THAN FLIGHT IS ITS BEST DEFENCE



PINK-EARED DUCK. FOUND ALL AROUND AUSTRALIA IN LAKES AND SWAMPS.

RED-NECKED AVOCET HAS AN UNUSUAL CALL, LIKE THE BARK OF A DOG!

THE SILVER GULL RENOWNED FOR ROBBING OTHER BIRDS NESTS OF THEIR EGGS.

SPOTLESS CRAKE - ITS DULL COLOURING IS A PERFECT CAMOUFLAGE.

PLUMED TREE-DUCK. STREAMS AND BILLABONGS. SPENDS ITS TIME PREENING IN THE SHALLOWS.

YELLOW-FACED CORMORANT. IT INHABITS SWAMPS AND ROCKY ISLANDS. FISH ARE ITS MAIN DIET.

BY CAROL MEASURES.

A GREAT NATURALIST

YOU CARE FOR NOTHING BUT SHOOTING, DOGS AND RAT CATCHING, AND YOU WILL BE A DISGRACE TO YOUR FAMILY AND YOURSELF!

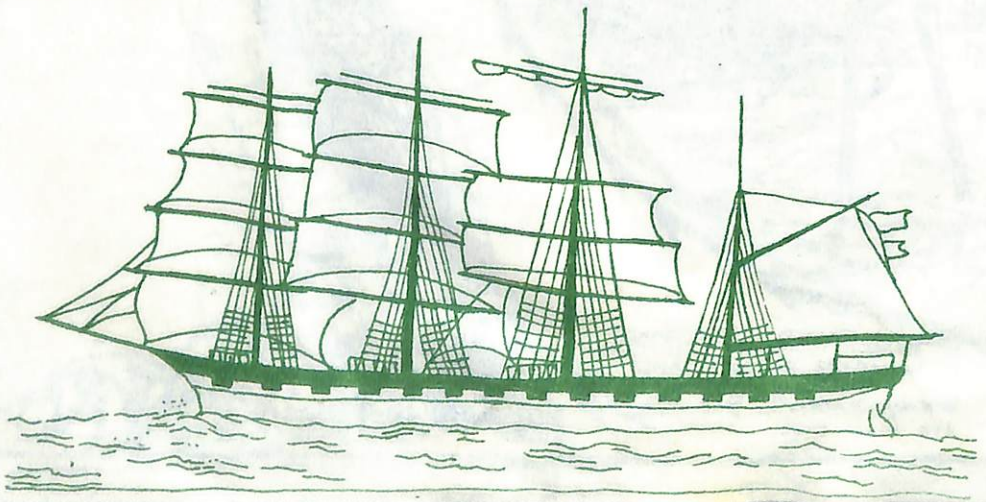
Has your father ever said this about you or something like it? Well, cheer up, it was also said about a boy born in 1809 called Charles Darwin. Later he was to become one of the most famous scientists in the world.

As a boy he did not do very well at school, although this was not Charles' fault as much as the school's. His teachers wanted him to study Latin and Greek, but Charles wanted to study birds and collect insects. However, he kept working hard enough to go onto university where he first studied to be a doctor. He did not care much for that and began to study science.

THEN CAME HIS BIG CHANCE!

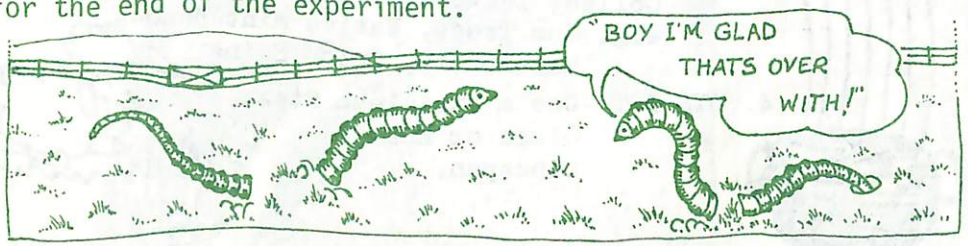
The British Government decided to make a survey of South America. The ship and captain and crew were chosen. The captain wanted a naturalist aboard, and Charles was chosen. So in 1831 Charles Darwin set sail on his famous voyage with 'The Beagle'.

Darwin had some hard times on the ship. He was often sick, and he never really recovered from an illness he caught on his travels. For the rest of his life he was a sick man, but he had such a marvellous spirit that everyone who knew him loved him.



On his voyage Darwin saw many strange things. The Beagle visited Australia on the south and east coasts. Darwin did not enjoy himself very much in Australia. Still, he had been on a ship at sea for five years and was no doubt very keen to get home. In 1837 he wrote the story of his journey, called 'Naturalist's Voyage'.

To give you some idea of how patiently he worked, here is one story. He wanted to see if earthworms could turn a stony paddock into a good one. So he picked out a small paddock and spread stones over the surface. Twenty-nine years later he dug up the ground and found the stones buried 18cm below the grass. All that time the earthworms had been ploughing the field and gradually burying the stones. Darwin waited twenty-nine years for the end of the experiment.



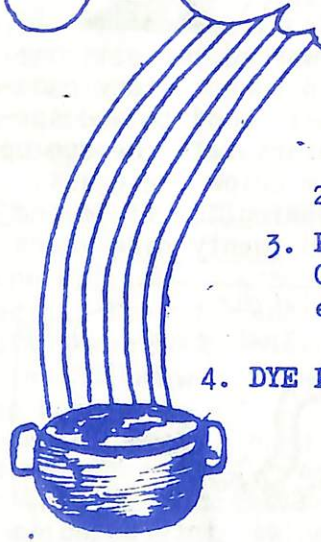
This was only a small part of his work. He was interested in how the world came to have all kinds of different plants and animals, as we know them today. Eventually he wrote his famous book called 'The Origin of Species'. The story is too long to tell here but some day you will study it in your science lessons.

Remember, every boy or girl interested in science can do the same as Darwin - a notebook, close study and patience, that is all you need!

By S. Bardfast.

Wool Dyeing with Plants

Did you know that plants can produce all the colours of the.....



Things you need:

1. WOOL from a fleece (spun or unspun)
2. SOAP
3. PLANT MATERIAL (be kind to the plants)
   Collect leaves, stems, bark, seed pods.
   e.g. Gum Trees, Native Mint Bushes, Malaleucas, Onion Skins
4. DYE POT Use a Stainless Steel, Glass or Enamel Saucepan.

Prepare the wool by soaking it in cold water overnight. Rinse well and wash with hot water and soap. Rinse thoroughly with warm water.

Place the wool in saucepan with water and plant material (Use 2 to 4 times more plant to wool).

Bring your brew to the boil, then allow to simmer stirring occasionally. Experiment with length of time. Some plants produce dye instantly while others may take up to an hour or longe

Make a record of your coloured wools. Tie them to a card and label with Name of Plant and time taken for dyeing.

by catherine M

YUK!

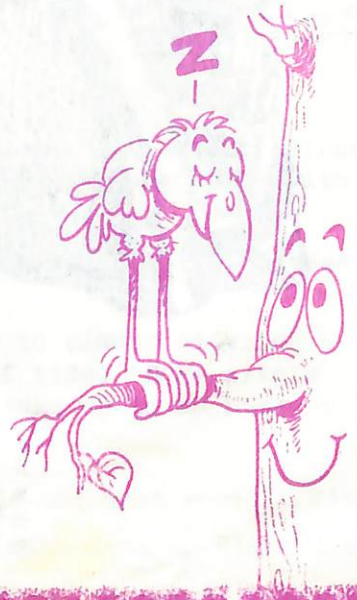
Meet Yuk, who may well be the biggest cane toad in the world! She is 22.86cm long and weighs 1247g, and hails from Maryborough in Qld. Do you know why cane toads live in Australia, and what crops they like to live in best? What measures have been taken to try and rid us of these pests?

Yuk is the global heavyweight champion. The queen cane toad is presently enthroned at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane.

BITS 'N' PIECES~

Can you help Wally find his way to his home?

DID YOU KNOW?



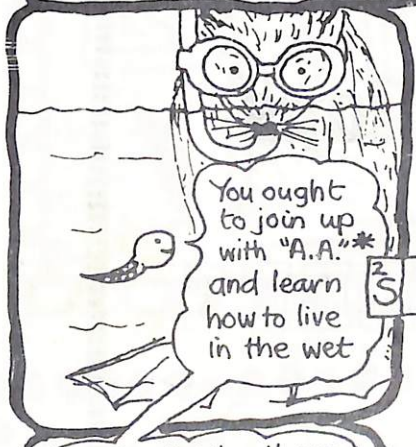
Sometimes one may wonder why a bird doesn't fall off a branch while sitting sleeping. The reason is, that in the legs of the bird are some muscles which automatically make the bird's claws grasp tightly on to the branch, when influenced by the weight of the bird.

ODDS & ENDS

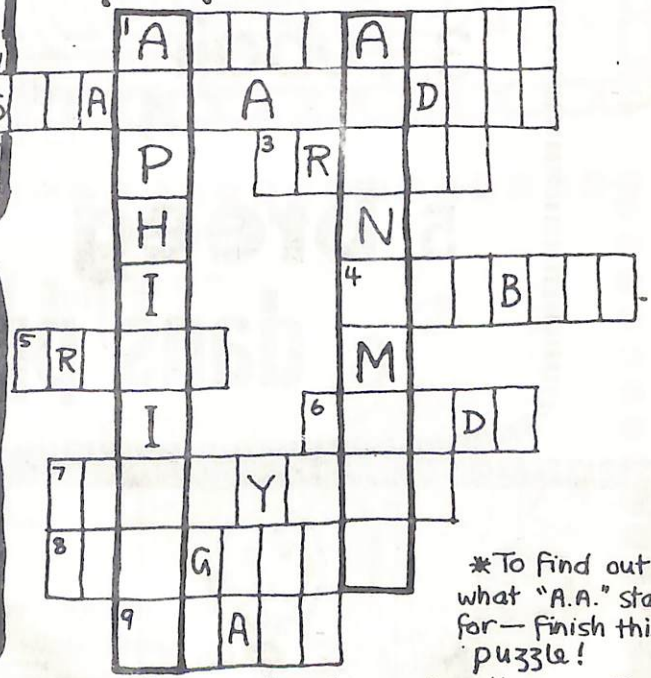
Can you unjumble the names of these Australian Water Birds? They have already been talked about in Nature Notes, so see how well you've read!

1. biis
2. **niblolops**
3. rubaji
4. TREEG
5. **breeg**
6. **dans ppeir**

1. IBIS 2. spoonbill 3. jabiru 4. egret 5. grebe 6. sand piper



WALLY IN THE WET



CLUES:

1. Like crocodiles!
2. Similar to lizards.
3. What Terri will become (pl.)
4. Little Aussie nippers!
5. They walk sideways.
6. Like frogs but warty.
7. 'Freak' Australian marsupial.
8. Underwater birds of the Southern Hemisphere.
9. Fur, flippers, whiskers.

*To find out what "A.A." stan for — finish this puzzle!

↘ What does this word really mean?

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BYE!!