

NATURE NOTES



Vol. 21
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July 1984

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

This month's issue was to be about fire, but we just couldn't ignore the Olympic Games in Los Angeles, so we've tried to combine both. Don't you think Wilma Prohasky's drawing of Wally carrying the Olympic torch is most appropriate?

Inside you'll find out about animal Olympians, lots of interesting facts about fire and, in the centre pages, a NEW competition.

That reminds me, five lucky people won prizes in our last competition. They were -

Emma Wing Jan
Adrian McCrae
Debbie Michael
Amanda Loughman
Kerry Foltyn

These people will receive their prizes with this issue of Nature Notes. You have a chance to win something this term, but please remember when you send in your entry to also send us your name, age and school or home address. KEEP THOSE ENTRIES ROLLING IN! The closing date is August 10th.



Phew! I'm hot after that long run.

Happy Reading,

Rosalie Collie
Editor.

COMPETITION*

One of our artists, Carol Measures, has drawn a picture of several Australian bush creatures toasting marshmallows by a campfire. You will find it in the centre pages. We would like you to write in the balloons whatever you think Kanga and Koala are saying, and colour in the picture.

THEN, fill in the form below, and send your entry to - The Editor, Nature Notes, P.O.Box 28, Ringwood East, 3135.

Entries close on August 10th. Results will be announced in the October issue.

Can you find all these animals in the picture? Emu, Kangaroo, Wallaby, Koala, Horseshoe bat, Owl, Kookaburra, Python, Possum, Platypus, Lyrebird, Bilby, Long-tailed Numbat, Goanna, Dingo, Pygmy Possum and Mouse.

There are two more common garden creatures also - Do you know what they are?

COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

NAME:

AGE:

ADDRESS:

.....

..... POSTCODE:



Come on Ernie!
Do hurry. We'll miss all the fun.



Opened chambers of a seed container on a Banksia

Believe it or not! Fire is essential to our unique environment. Many plants have seed pods which will not open to release the seeds until they have been scorched by the intense heat of a bush fire. Once released, the seeds lie in the ash of the forest floor waiting until the next rains to germinate them.

In the Mountain Ash forests of southeastern Australia, fire is important in clearing away the choking blanket of rainforest plants which would otherwise prevent the young saplings from growing into the world's tallest hardwoods.

Many Australian plants grow rapidly after firing. Have you ever driven past the

FIRE-FRIEND



scene of a bush fire and noticed the vivid green of the young shoots against the black charred tree trunks?

Western Australian grass trees- before a fire, (left) and after a fire, (right).

Before Aboriginal man came to Australia fires were started frequently from lightning strikes and other natural causes. However Aborigines used a method known as "fire-stick farming" to help them in their hunt for food. They burned the forests, which were once thick and dense, to create more open areas. The young plants and grasses which grew after the fires attracted the kangaroos and other animals, and made them easier to catch. Aborigines, also, favoured the young growth of ferns, leaves, grasses and tree shoots.

In the deserts, fires were used also for signalling to other members of a group, out foraging for food.

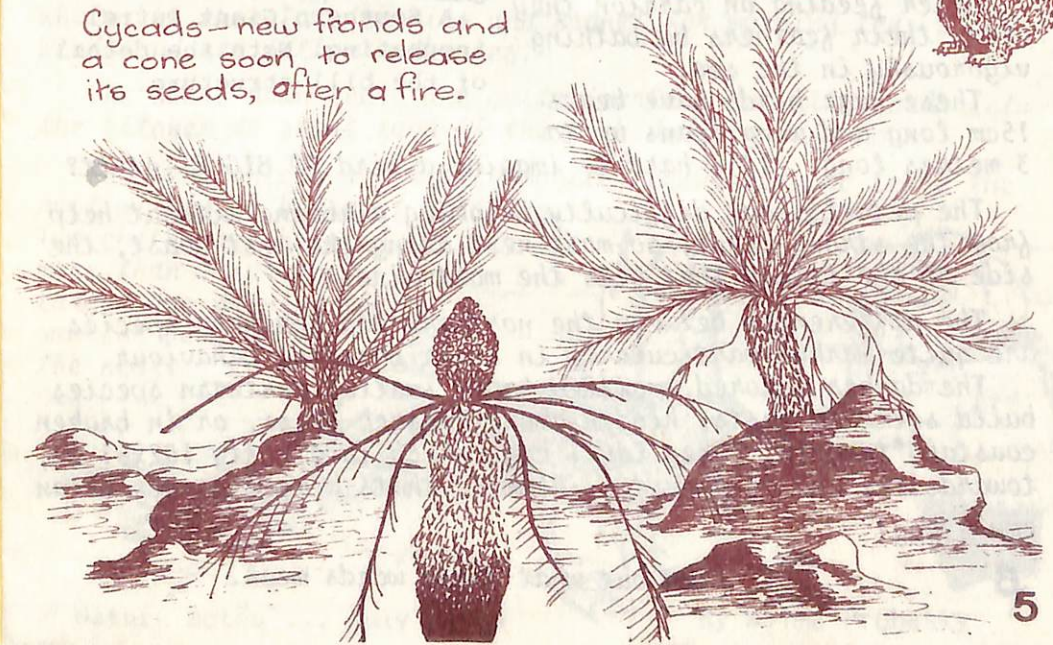


OR FOE?

I like to warm MY hands in front of a 'Pot bellied' stove



Cycads - new fronds and a cone soon to release its seeds, after a fire.



MAGNIFICENT of Macquarie

One Sunday recently, Wendy Wombat had a long talk with her mother, who lives in Victoria on *ham radio.

Wendy chatted happily about the enormous birds that live on the island. She said both the Northern and Southern Giant Petrels breed on Macquarie. Also the Snow Petrel, a beautiful snowy white bird.

They are predatory *scavengers, killing penguins at the rookeries, clearing the beaches of *carriion, which is abundant during the elephant seal breeding season.

A pecking order is *established amongst the giant petrels gathered around a carcass through threat displays and fighting. The threatening bird advances, wings outstretched, tail fanned, neck feathers ruffled, with it's head swinging from side to side. A rough lot are'nt they?

After feeding on carrion they clean their feathers by bathing vigorously in the sea.

These huge birds have beaks 15cm long and wing spans up to 3 metres long. It's hard to imagine a bird SO BIG is'nt it?

The petrels have difficulty becoming airborne without help from the strong winds, so most nest along the west coast, the side of the island that gets the most wind.

The differences between the northern and southern species are quite marked particularly in their breeding behaviour.

The darker colored, mottled brown smaller northern species build solitary nests, hidden among tussock grass, or in broken coastal *terrain. They lay 1 egg, which is a hefty 102x61 mm, towards the end of August -- h'mm ...thats almost as big as an emu's egg!



A Southern Giant Petrel incubating. Note the detail of the bill structure.

GIANT BIRDS Island

The southern species breeds 4-6 weeks later nesting in colonies on open coastal plateaus.

A few are almost all white, the white feathers being acquired when chicks and remain so for life.

A young giant petrel found in Chile in 1976 had been*banded on Macquarie Island as a chick shortly before. It flew across the Pacific Ocean in 1 month on it's first flight. How's that for effort!

Wendy Wombat said that most of the year the huge Southern Skua birds are the expeditioners' closest companions. A large group always wait outside the kitchen window ... and few scraps of meat thrown out ever reach the ground!

They are dark brown birds with black bills and have a wing span up to 900mm. Incredible!

The skuas on the island are called "Bernie's chooks". Bernie is the fabulous cook down there, who makes chocolate eclairs and scones for morning tea. Lucky Wendy and her fellow workmates.

The skuas down there are quite fearless and will sneak into the kitchen to steal food if the back door is left open.

The skua chicks are highly mobile, being able to leave the nest within 24 hours of hatching. Two chicks are hatched but rarely more than 1 survives. The larger one driving the smaller away from the nest.





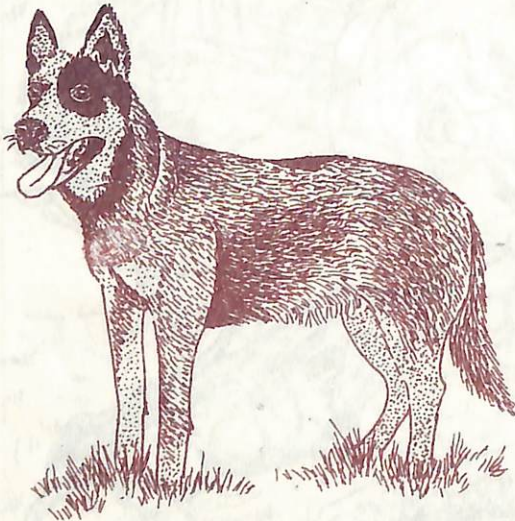
DOGS FROM

Not so long ago, Australia had no dogs of its own, other than the dingo. Early settlers brought various types of dogs which had served them well in the "old country", but these were often unsuitable for work in the rugged terrain and harsh climate of Australia.

One of the best known of the breeds produced by cross-breeding is the Kelpie. A tough hard-working little dog used on sheep farms in Australia. Its ability to learn to control sheep, fowl and other small animals is now recognized world-wide, and many Kelpies are being exported all over the world each year.



The Australian Cattle Dog, (also known as the Blue or Queens-land Heeler), is a blend of Dingo, Smooth Collie, Dalmation, Kelpie and two extinct breeds - the Black Bobtailed sheepdog and the Smith-field Drover. It is a stocky working dog known for its bravery and endurance.



Both of these breeds will work from sunrise to sunset, travelling very long distances in heat or the bitter cold of winter.

'DOWN UNDER'

The Australian Terrier is bred from many different old British terrier breeds. Its only use in Australia is as a pet or a popular show dog. It is an alert, happy little dog which loves to "show off" and will prove very useful by catching mice or other rodents.



The Australian Silky Terrier is a cross of the Australian Terrier and imported Yorkshire Terriers. It is a smaller longer-coated version of the Australian Terrier. It is an excellent pet for anyone living in a city or town as it does not need lots of space for exercise and has a small appetite.



The Dingo (known as Warrigal by the Aborigines), was considered in the early 1900's to be a highly intelligent pest. It was the reason for the building of the longest fence in the world because it found sheep an easy catch for dinner. However the Dingo also eats feral rabbits and pigs, both of which are also regarded as pests because they eat the plant foods of sheep and cattle. In the last few years the Dingo has become a popular pet.



Pictures by W. Prohasky

OLYMPIC TRIALS (& ERRORS!)



Hi Folks! C.C. Crow here at the time trials to choose Australia's team for the Animal Olympic Games... over to the track for some results...

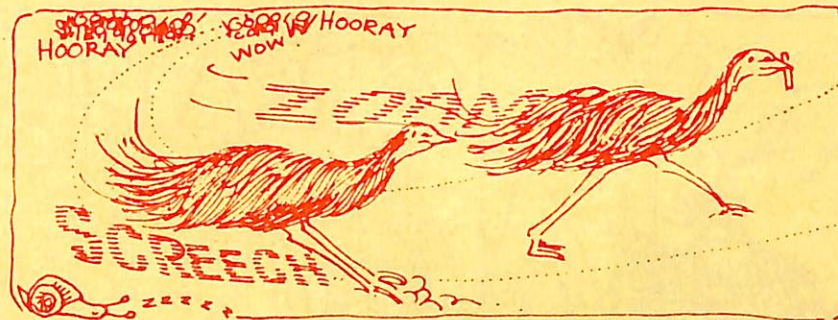


Fantastic Folks! A long jump measuring 13 metres!



It looks like every one is in the Tug-o-War!

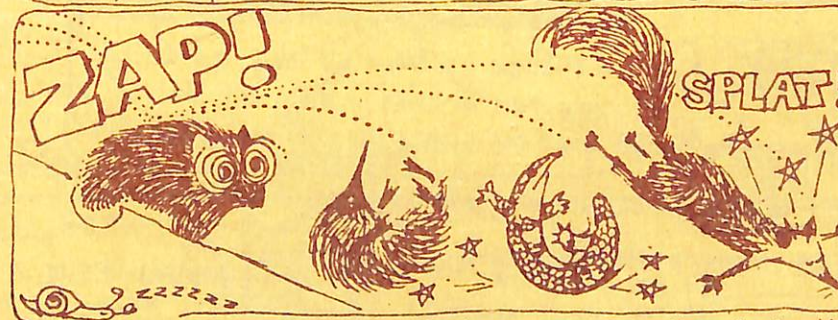
* All measurements given are accurate indications of the abilities of the various animals involved.



WOW! what a great baton change by the Emus!



Starters in the 100 metres dash are having a photo taken ... Wait a minute folks! Wally looks quite strange..OH NO!

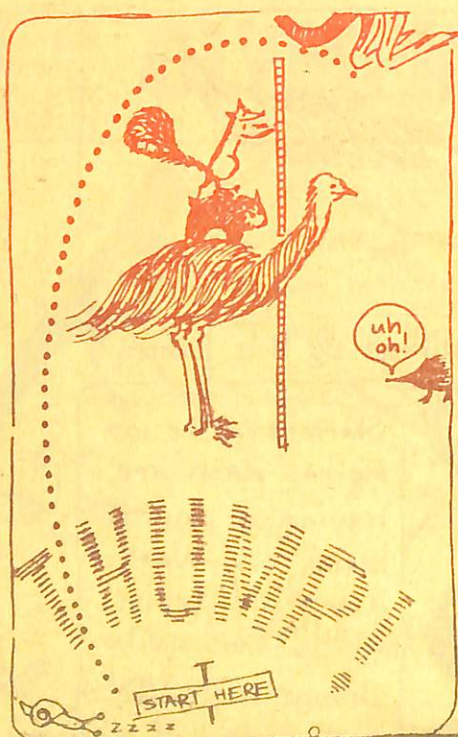


Wally has caught his foot in a hurdle hole!!



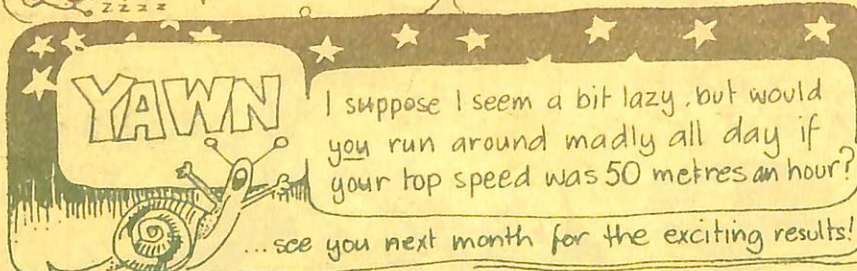
Can you name the creatures along the bottom of these pages, and the countries they represent?

Answers: Across - 4. cotton 5. ash 9. coal 10. asbestos 13. oil
Down - 1. soot 2. wood 3. gas 4. charcoal 6. sand 7. paper 8. stone 11. brick 12. smoke



GREAT!

a High jump of 315 centimetres by our Red Kangaroo. I think we have a great chance to win the Animal-Olympics. Especially if Wally Wombat keeps away from flash bulbs !!! Well, I am flying off to the Games Village now to give you all the Games news ..this is C.C. Crow signing off for now!

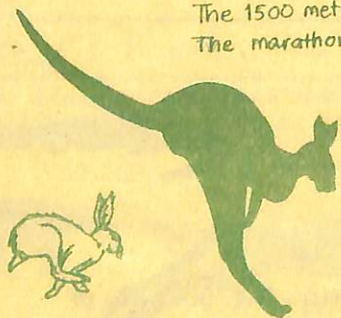


CAN YOU predict which animals should win the following events?

- The 100 metre dash.
- The high jump.
- The long jump.
- The 1500 metres.
- The marathon.

- The 100metres freestyle.
- The 1500 metres freestyle.
- A 100 metres free-flying race.
- A 100 kilometres flying race.

* Discuss your answers with your grade.



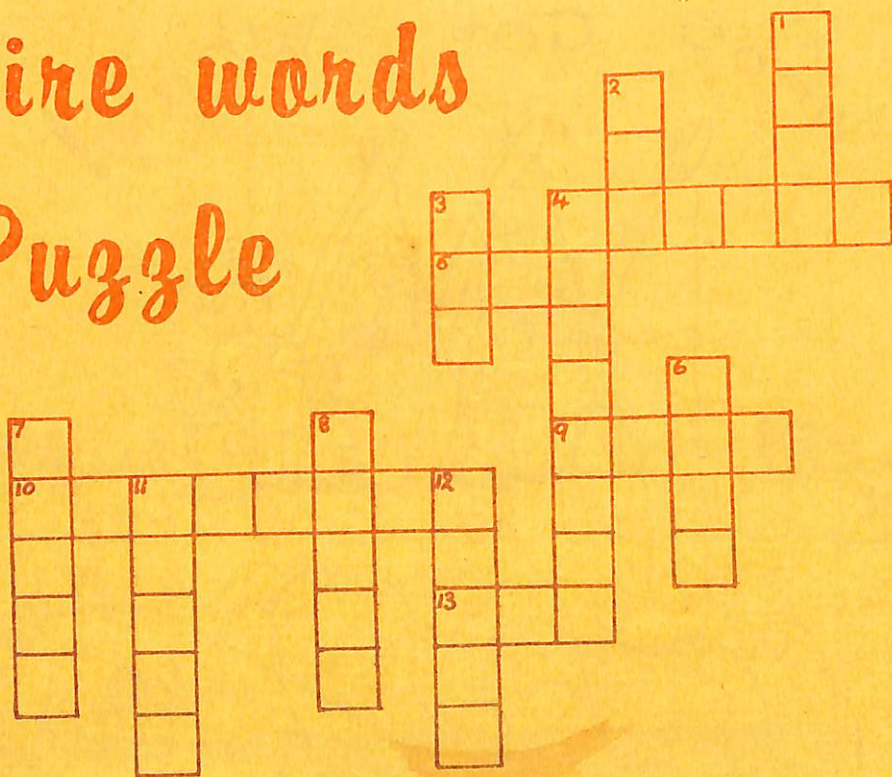
Who's Got What!



Paul's 1/2 page



Fire words Puzzle



CLUES:

ACROSS

- 4.c..... is grown to make clothing.
5.a.. is a powder left after fire.
9.c... is made of buried trees.
10.a..... is a fireproof material.
13.o.. is a liquid found underground

Answers - on page 13.

DOWN

- 1.s... is black and sticky
2.w... is produced from trees.
3.natural g.. is used for cooking.
4.c..... is used to draw pictures.
6.s... is crushed rock.
7.we write on p....
8.s.... is another word for rock.
11.some houses are made of b....
12.s.... makes dirty air.

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P.O.Box 28, Ringwood East, 3135. Phone (03) 879 1263