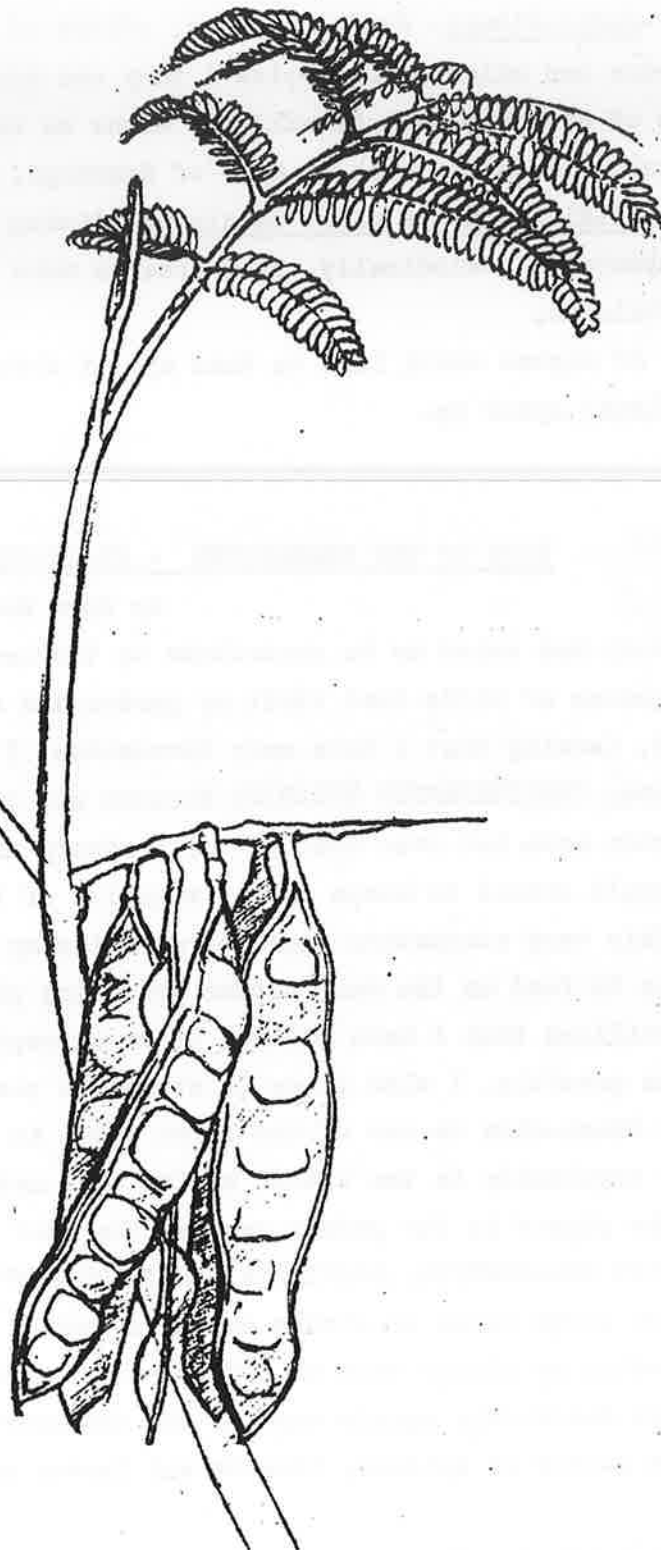


**S.G.A.P. BIRDS AND NATIVE PLANTS  
STUDY GROUP**

**Newsletter No. 2 January 1984**

Albizia Lophantha

Cus



Many thanks to Colleen Werner for the  
above drawing.

Dear Members,

I would like to wish everyone a very happy and healthy 1984, as well as plenty of good bird and plant watching. A few things I would like to mention

- Change of address- please note that my address has changed to 44 Hawkins Pde. since the last newsletter.

-Information Sheet- the production of an information sheet suitable for a suburban gardener has been suggested. Any comments about its format, content, etc. or offers of help would be appreciated.

-Audio-visual- Again comments, offers of help/expertise would be appreciated. If anyone has slides ( or copies ) they can donate it would help make a start. Slides of either plants or wildlife alone as well as in combination could be relevant. Slides can also be made of drawings, paintings, diagrams etc..

-Wildlife/Native plant Catalogue- Aiming to make a start in September and then update it periodically. Feel free to make suggestions about the format of the catalogue.

If anyone would like to take any of these (or perhaps other) projects in hand please speak up.

#### BIRD OF THE NEWSLETTER - BLACK-CHINNED HONEYEATER

by Norm Bone

Judy has asked me to contribute to the newsletter an article on one of the many species of birds that visit my garden and after giving the matter a lot of thought, (seeing that I have many favourites) I have decided on the Black-Chinned Honeyeater (MELITHREPTUS GULARIS) because not only is it very common in the Shepparton area but over most of the northern and eastern areas of Australia and as a result should be known by the majority of the members of the Study Group.

This very attractive small bird visits my garden in large numbers throughout the year to feed on the many nectar producing plants such as Eucalypts, Hakeas and Grevilleas that I have planted in an attempt to attract as many species of birds as possible. I also place in strategic positions an artificial nectar and the Black-chin is one of the first birds to line up for a drink of this mixture especially in the winter months when natural food can be rather scarce. Among the plants in the garden amongst the most popular are EUCALYPTUS LEUCOXYLON, EUCALYPTUS MEGACORNUTA, GREVILLEA "ROBYN GORDON" and HAKEA LAURINA. They seem to prefer large trees or shrubs and as a result of this they very seldom are seen feeding on plants such as CORREAS or anything that is low growing.

The Black-chin spends most of the day searching for food and its diet consists mostly of spiders, insects and larvae as well as large quantities of nectar.

On a hot day they are very frequent visitors to my bird bath and they<sup>seem</sup> to relish the chance of having a quick dip followed by a meal of nectar from the nearest tree or shrub. The Black-chin is a very vocal bird and the garden comes alive when he decides to embark on a song of his choosing.

a delightful hanging nest of grasses and strips of bark with various types of fur or wool for the inside lining and into this lovely cup shaped structure it lays one or two salmon-pink spotted with brown and red eggs.

The Black-chin is more often than not found in the company of White-Plumed Honeyeaters in this area and it is not unusual to find both species feeding on the one tree or shrub. They are a very active and beautiful bird and one that will compliment any garden.

Refer to page 489 of the Readers Digest Book of Australian Birds for further information regarding this bird.

#### COLOUR OF FLOWERS

Do birds have colour preferences? Writes Bela Bard-Brucker (Werribee, Vic.)

"Certainly green flowering plants- Grevillea arenaria, G. mucronulata, G. jephcottii really do hold an attraction to the honeyeaters as well as green flowering Callistemons. I dont know what it is but I always recommend these if asked."

#### WALKING BIRDS

Listed amongst Jenny Rich's (Eastwood, N.S.W.) joys amidst suburbia are "2 noisy miners successfully reared in our backyard- they fell out of the nest over the road and were encouraged to walk to our place when too weak and little to fly! One only lasted a week, other 2 now independent."

#### SOME LARGER GARDEN VISITORS - WALLABIES AND KANGAROOS

For those fortunate enough to have wallabies and kangaroos visiting the garden the reality of their presence in the garden is perhaps not always so delightful. Writes Val Mc Conchie (Emerald, Vic.) "we do have other wildlife.

A wallaby pays us an occasional visit and usually does quite a pruning job (not always necessary) to a number of plants- favourites seem to be Acacia itsaphylla, Kunzea baxteri, and Grevillea rosemarinifolia and G. sericea.

I recently planted some small Casuarina equisetifolia var. incana around a house at Sandon River (east of Grafton, N.S.W.). Despite their unpalatable look they were soon grazed by red-necked wallabies. Keeping the wallabies out can be a problem. One Sandon resident, with flourishing and unfenced vegetable garden swears by poultry manure. He has found that by keeping his garden surrounded by poultry manure he not only fertilizes his vegetables but keeps the numerous wallabies and grey kangaroos at bay. The smell, he believes, deters the animals.

Somewhat divergent from Australian wildlife and flora, but perhaps in line with this thinking, an artical in "The Amateur Beekeeper", October 1983

"A Soda Bottle Fort"

wage a constant battle to save bees and honey. Robert Gruberg, beekeeper of Catron, Pa., has learned an easy way to keep bears at bay, especially in Northern Pennsylvania where the black bear population has increased substantially in recent years.

Soda bottles, partly filled with human urine, placed 3m. apart in a circle around the bee yard, keep the bruins at a safe distance. The non-returnable bottles are set in the ground at an angle to minimise the dilution with rain water. Apparently the marauders will not venture an attack on the bottle fortification.

#### ARTIFICIAL FEEDING

Writes Martin Bouman (Ermington, N.S.W.), "However I would like to emphasize the point that artificial feeding will deter birds from seeking grubs etc. from trees. Of course trees greatly benefit from being "De-grubbed" and even sparrows which readily take food scraps will seek out caterpillars if necessity dictates. Anyhow, if one wishes to see birds at close range a bird bath, and drink spot should do the trick."

#### PLANT OF THE NEWSLETTER - THE ALBIZIAS

Writes Val Maher (Cranbourne South, Vic.)

"Albizia lophantha grows here- self seeded. In 2 years, from self sown seed a tree has grown near our garage to 20 feet high and branching to the ground. Beautiful markings on the trunk, copious food for birds at a relatively lean time in late autumn/winter and attractive foliage and flowers. Thornbills and honeyeaters frequent the tree and last week I saw and heard a mistletoe bird perched on an outer branch."

The Albizias (Crested Wattles) resemble the Acacias and belong to the same leguminous family, the family Mimosaceae. Albizias occur largely in the tropical parts of the world. In Australia there are about ten different species ranging through W.A., tropical N.T., north and north-eastern Queensland. Some species, most commonly A. lophantha (Crested Wattle or Cape Leeuin Wattle), have become naturalised throughout the eastern states.

The Albizias are shrubs or small trees with bipinnate leaves. A. lophantha grows to about 8m. and has a spreading habit. Its flowers are pedicillate and in greenish-yellow spikes about 2cm. in diameter and up to 8cm. long. The stamens are long (about 1 to 2 cm.) and are united at the base, a feature distinguishing them from the Acacias whose stamens are free at the base.

The flowers are scented, a rather strong sickly scent to my mind. It flowers from July to October and carries its fruits over summer. The leguminous fruits have a tough seed coat which splits to release the ripe seed. The seeds will germinate easily if given the same pre-sowing treatment as for Acacias.

Here in the lower Blue Mts. A. lophantha has grown rapidly despite water shortage and poor shallow, sandy soil. It has been found to tolerate a range of soils from light sand to heavy clay though it prefers a sunny, well-drained position

In different references it is described as both frosthardy and frost tender, in the absence of frost here I don't know how it is affected.

Like Acacias, the Albizias are subject to borer infestation and flowers may be attacked by thrips. Still, they are hardy, attractive, quick growing garden plants and their flowers provide a valuable source of nectar over the winter period.

Albizias don't <sup>seem</sup> to find a place into lists of bird attractive plants (except for one inclusion of them in a list of plants attractive to insect-eaters in "Grow What Where"-Australian Plant Study Group). However, in our garden they seem to be very attractive to small honeyeaters such as Eastern Spinebills and Yellow-faced honeyeaters who often will cling upside <sup>down</sup> to flowers whilst probing them from beneath.

"Grow What Where" also includes them in a list of fodder plants, that is plants which can be fed to livestock when normal food is scarce.

If you would like seeds of the Albizia lophantha there are some available.

#### ARTIFICIAL NEST SITES

Writes Val Maher (Cranbourne South, Vic.)

"In answer to artificial nest sites- we didn't set out to provide one, but the striated pardalote chooses to rear two broods each year between the outer wall and the lining of an old shed. Entry is through a hole made <sup>by</sup> removal of a power point! This nest is 4 feet above ground and the birds fly past our heads as we watch them arrive to feed the young."

#### SUCCESSFUL PARASITISM

We presently have a young Channel-billed Cuckoo frequenting our backyard. It has been around since Christmas and it's very harrassed looking guardians, a pair of Pied Currawongs, have been in constant tow. The cuckoo frequents tall trees and spends it's day begging- wings flapping, mouth wide open revealing a salmon-pink gape and uttering a loud begging call very similiar to that of a young magpie. The currawongs, in response, frantically search for morsels to appease it. It's food consists largely of what the currawongs can glean from the foliage and peeling bark of tall trees which include Eucalyptus notabilis, E. piperita, E. gummifera and Angophora costata. An entire silken cocoon extracted from the foliage of E. notabilis was seen pushed down the cuckoo's throat, also sunflower seeds from a feeding table and ripe strawberries from the garden.

The cuckoo is now perhaps three times the size of the currawongs, the currawongs look worn out.

LIST OF MEMBERS

- Bob Bannon, (representing Pine Rivers SGAP), 41 Viscount St., Bray Park, Qld. 4500  
 Bela Bard-Brucker, (representing Werribee SGAP), 17 Woodville Park Drive,  
 Hoppers Crossing, Vic. 3030  
 Elaine Bean, P.O. Box 397, Nambour, Qld. 4560  
 Robyn Bigg, 12 Wills Ave., Castle Hill, N.S.W. 2154  
 ✓ Norm Bone, 21 Vickers St., Kialla, Vic. 3631  
 Margie Cowan, c/- Public School, Carrathool, N.S.W. 2711  
 Claire Harvey, 38 Governors Drive, Lapstone, N.S.W. 2773  
 Ida Jackson, 7 Centenary Ave., Kingscote, S.A. 5223  
 Janet Lawson, 8 May St., Auburn, N.S.W. 2142  
 ✓ Val Maher, 2 Langley Rd., Cranbourne South, Vic., 3977  
 Val McConchie, Lot 31, Steele Rd., Emerald, Vic. 3782  
 Victor Nossar, 45 Belmore Rd., Peakhurst, N.S.W. 2210  
 Jenny Rich, 2A Brabyn St., Eastwood, N.S.W. 2122  
 Brian Roach, 47 Eucalyptus Drive, Westleigh, N.S.W. 2120  
 Shepparton and Districts SGAP  
 ✓ Lola Smith, 94 Emu Plains Rd., Mt. Riverview, N.S.W. 2774.  
 ✓ Judy and Peter Smith, 44 Hawkins Pde., Blaxland, N.S.W. 2774  
 Margery Stutchbury, P.O. Box 333, Bundaberg, Qld. 4670  
 Margaret Tomalin, 185 Burns Rd., Springwood, N.S.W. 2777  
 Jo Walker, 16 Blundell St., Queanbeyan, N.S.W. 2620  
 ✓ Joan Wallace, 9 Albert Rd., Beecroft, N.S.W. 2119  
 Lyn Williams, 11 Kia Ora St., Mt. Barker, S.A. 5251  
 Colleen Werner, 7 Deakin st., Ermington, N.S.W. 2115

If anyone would like to pay us a visit I would be delighted to meet you.  
 Our phone no. is 047-395312. Similarly Val Maher invites visits from fellow  
 members. Val's phone no. is 782 2888.

NEXT NEWSLETTER - MAY

The bird and plant for the May newsletter are the GREY BUTCHERBIRD and  
 GREVILLEA "ROBYN GORDON" .

Any contributions by April 20 please

Judy Smith  
 44 Hawkins Pde.,  
 Blaxland 2774.