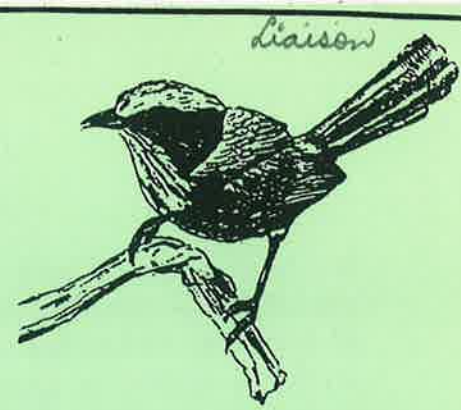




ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES
FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS
**WILDLIFE AND NATIVE PLANTS
STUDY GROUP**

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Newsletter No 23

Dear Members

At last I have found time to put pen to paper once again! Many apologies for the delay but my work commitments are such that I find it very difficult to allocate sufficient time to produce this newsletter. I can normally find a few things to include although more input from members would be nice! It is really finding time to sit down and put it all together that I have trouble with.

I am sitting down now (on a Sunday morning) but I am being continually distracted (not difficult!) by what is happening outside. There are 2 wallabies feeding just outside the window - they also peer in (nose against glass) to watch me watching them. The Satin Bowerbirds (those purple eyes are gorgeous) are also out there - they have been attracted by the fruits of the MELASTOMA (not the native one I am afraid!) - they also take seed from the birdtable, food from the wallaby dishes and drink from the birdbath. The bar-shouldered doves and crested pigeons are also here. The magpies and currawongs can be a bit of a problem but we have 'Larry' our Rainbow Lorikeet that was nursed back to health and released about a year ago - he regards the birdtable as HIS territory and has no problems chasing off the larger birds. Some of you might like to try 'BILL'S BONZA BIRD FEEDER' (details enclosed) which I found in the recent edition of the TOMAREE GEOGRAPHIC magazine.

Our plant success this year has been with a EUCALYPTUS PTYCHOCARPA. This tree was planted about 3 years ago and flowered for the first time this year. We admired the flowers but wondered why they only lasted a few days? A spotlighting trip solved this mystery - a young ringtail possum was having a wonderful time. When the flowers were all gone he proceeded to devour the foliage, there were also several broken branches as though he had started to build a nest and changed his mind. The tree was an absolute wreck after he had finished with it but we don't mind at all as we planted all our trees and shrubs to be used by the wildlife. He certainly did a good pruning job for us and reached those parts that we would never be able to reach!!

This ringtail has a story to tell. He came to us as a very small baby with his mother who had part of her tail amputated due to an injury. We kept them for a few weeks until the tail had healed and then released them. Unfortunately the mother disappeared after just a few nights leaving the youngster behind. He was much smaller than ringtails I would normally release but he slept in a nestbox and came back for supplementary feeding every night. When he outgrew his little box he built himself a nest on top of a hand of bananas covered by a large leaf for protection.



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We have a pair of baby ringtails in the humidicrip at the moment - the female (who is very beautiful) was seen dashing across a road being chased by a cat. Luckily the motorist managed to catch her before the cat did. There is no doubt that uncontrolled cats and dogs do an enormous amount of damage to our wildlife. I know from the number of phone calls I get at work but we only hear about cases where there is a survivor. No-one will phone to say that their cat or dog has just killed something and of course there must be many instances where animals die unseen.



THE GREENER TIMES — OCTOBER 1993

I have just had another distraction - a new bird on the birdbath - medium size, pale grey breast, dark grey (with perhaps a green tinge) wings, grey legs and black pointed beak and deep yellow across the top of the eye. It appears to be an insect eater foraging on the ground (seen eating a worm) and amongst shrubs. I can't find it in the book so it's probably a young something or other - why can't baby birds look like their parents? Any ideas as to its identity?

Time for a morning drink - and yet another distraction - a Brown Honeyeater with a beak full of cobwebs, taken from a seat outside the kitchen window, and flying over to a very dense ACACIA FLORIBUNDA where the beautiful little nest is being constructed. It doesn't pay to be too houseproud outside does it?

Cont/...3

I get lots of interesting information from the BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB OF AUSTRALIA so could certainly recommend becoming a member if you're not already of course. Some winter-flowering plants were listed by them recently: EPACRIS IMPRESSA, E. RECLINATA, CORREA BACKHOUSIANA, C. CALYCINA, C. 'MARIAN'S MARVEL', BANKSIA OBLONGIFOLIA, B. PALUDOSA, B. 'GIANT CANDLES', DRYANDRA FORMOSA, D. PRAEMORSA, D. NOBILIS and finally CONOSTYLIS BEALIANA. It will of course be necessary to check the availability and suitability of these to your location.

BOCA has a series of reports available, No 3 being Birds and Garden Survey 1991 - \$12 including postage from The Bird Observers Club of Australia, PO Box 185, NUNAWADING VIC 3131. I have also included the BOCA Birds and Wattles Survey Sheet for anyone who would like to participate.

Are your garden birds injuring themselves against windows?



For \$10 (including postage) the BOCA will forward a package which includes an information sheet, suggesting ways of dealing with the situation, plus two black self-adhesive shapes of birds of prey.

Butterfly and Other Invertebrate Interest Group

I have enclosed details of this proposed group for anyone who is interested. I have also included a list of plants to attract butterflies by Lorna Johnston.

Predation of young rainforest plants by the Red-legged Pademelon (ITRS News Vol 5, Issue 1, Mar 93)

This list was compiled to assist the protection of newly planted species but I think it could also be of interest to members of our group with pademelons in their area:

ACACIA AULACOCARPA, ACRONYCHIA ACIDULA, ARCHIDENDRON SP, ATHERTONIA DIVERSIFOLIA, CASTANOSPERMUM AUSTRALE, DELARBREA MICHIEANA, DIPLOGLOTTIS SIPHYLLOSTEGIA, ELAEOCARPUS ANGUSTIFOLIUS, FICUS SPP, GEISSOIS BIAGIANA, GREVILLEA BAILEYANA, MYRISTICA INSIPIDA, NAUCLEA ORIENTALIS, SCHEFFLERA ACTINOPHYLLA, SYZGIUM LEUHMANNII, S. GUSTAVIOIDES, S. TIERNEYANUM, TRISTANIA EXILOFLORA, XANTHOSTEMON CHRYSANTHUS.

Cont/...4

The Regent Honeyeater

The BOCA are seeking information on sightings of this beautiful bird which is an uncommon nomad in woodlands and open forest in the South-east from Kangaroo Island to Rockhampton.

Glossy Black Cockatoos

To attract these birds if you live between about Mackay in Queensland and South-east Victoria try ALLOCASUARINA VERTICILLATA, A. TORULOSA OR A. LITTORALIS.

Red-winged Parrots and King Parrots

These parrots have been observed eating the green fruits of GEIJERA PARVIFLORA.

Scarlet Honeyeaters

These birds have been seen in large numbers on a MELALEUCA LEUCADENDRA.

Leaf-eating by Fruit Bats

This is a little known aspect of fruit bat behaviour. Bats can obtain protein by chewing up certain leaves, swallowing the juice and spitting out the fibre as pellets. Two species of Albizia are known trees used in this way but there may be others. This behaviour is best noted from the small oval greenish pellets beneath the tree. (QNC NEWS No 194)

Faunascaping by David J Barnes

I have included a copy of this quite comprehensive list which will be very useful for members in South-east Queensland. It might be worth investigating if these plants will survive in other areas or choose another member of the same species.

Native wildlife as pets

One of our members, Ian Anderson feels strongly about the fact that it is illegal (SA excepted) to keep native animals as pets. His argument is that many vulnerable species could be saved if the public were allowed to breed them.

I cannot agree with Ian on this subject. Firstly, the 'cuddly' natives such as the possums, gliders and wallabies do not make suitable pets. I can vouch for the fact they are very cute as hand-reared youngsters but they are very prone to stress-related illnesses and can die suddenly for no apparent reason. They cannot be house-trained and make lots of mess when they have to be kept in cages indoors as babies. I suspect that most people would not have the necessary time, expertise or access for daily foraging for their specialised diets not to mention the fussy feeders with their individual preferences. It is not quite as simple as opening a tin of cat or dog food. My orphaned possums live in a very large aviary prior to release and it is very easy to know when they are 'ready to go'. The time of year, weather conditions and food availability still have to be taken into consideration but I never keep them 'locked up' longer than I absolutely have to. It is then wonderful to spotlight them in the evenings and see them foraging, jumping amongst the trees and building their nests or making homes in the boxes provided. Why would anyone want to cage these beautiful creatures when we can all plant the right trees and create the right conditions to have them living freely amongst us. I can never understand people who keep native birds in cages particularly the parrot family - it really does seem terribly cruel. There would also be the problem of people tiring of them and just letting them go without realising that they would need to be rehabilitated first and only released at suitable sites. Look at the problem we have with unwanted cats and dogs! I would welcome any comments on this issue.

'Operation Nestbox' - bring back the wildlife

I am researching the possibility of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland offering a free nestbox to every school in Queensland. Quite a challenge but hopefully not an impossible one. It would be necessary for a fauna survey to be done at each location so that the appropriate nestbox could be allocated. A follow-up survey would also be beneficial. I am hoping that perhaps parents or the local community could also be involved with this. I read a report about a primary school in South Australia that erected nestboxes which were so popular that they organised working bees to make boxes and sold a total of 610 to the public. It would be wonderful if this could be repeated all over Queensland!

I am anxious to approach the schools so that the project is accepted and seen as an environmental learning opportunity for the students rather than being rejected as an extra workload for the teachers. The Society does not have the finances for this so funding will be sought through grants and sponsorship so wish me luck. I will happily supply any information to anyone outside Queensland for a similar project, even just locally if not the whole state!



JUDY ELLIOTT



STATE EMBLEMS



VICTORIA - The Garden State.
ANIMAL - Leadbeaters Possum.
FLORAL - Pink Heath.
BIRD - Helmeted Honeyeater.

QUEENSLAND - The Sunshine State.
ANIMAL - Koala.
FLORAL - Cooktown Orchid.
BIRD - Brolga.

NEW SOUTH WALES - The First State.
ANIMAL - Platypus.
FLORAL - Waratah.
BIRD - Kookaburra.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA - The Festival State.
ANIMAL - Hairy-Nosed Wombat.
FLORAL - Sturt's Desert Pea.
BIRD - Piping Shrike.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA - The State of Excitement.
ANIMAL - Numbat.
FLORAL - Red and Green Kangaroo Paw.
BIRD - Black Swan.

TASMANIA - The Holiday Isle.
FLORAL - Tasmanian Blue Gum.
A.C.T. - The Nation's Capital.
FLORAL - Royal Bluebell.

NORTHERN TERRITORY - Outback Australia.
ANIMAL - Red Kangaroo.
FLORAL - Sturt's Desert Rose.
BIRD - Wedge-Tailed Eagle.