

# Friends of Coolart

FEBRUARY 1987

NEWSLETTER 1/87

EDITOR M. Taylor

Dear Friend of Coolart,

Best wishes to all of you for a very happy and prosperous New Year. 1986 was certainly most successful for Coolart and ended with a very special event on the last day of the year - the safe arrival of the first baby born to Coolart in nearly fifty years. Congratulations, Steve and Linda! The Warden's report on P.3. will tell you all about it.

## COMING EVENTS

### Visit by the Friends of the Museum

A group from the Friends of the Museum will be visiting the Mornington Peninsula and will be having lunch at Coolart on Sunday, 22nd February, between 12.00 noon and 2.00 pm. They would like to meet as many Friends of Coolart as possible, so all Friends are invited to a BYO barbecue or picnic lunch on that day. Do come along, spend some time at Coolart, and learn about the activities of another Friends' group.

### French Island Visit

Two previous visits to French Island have proved very popular and a third visit is planned for the weekend of the 11/12 April. Des Quinn, Co-ordinator of the Friends of French Island, has once again agreed to lead the walk on Saturday, 11 April, and those of you who have been with Des before know just how interesting and informed he is about the Island.

It may be possible to arrange over-night accomodation at French Island Lodge with a bus tour on the Sunday.

If you are interested in this visit on Saturday, 11, or Sunday, 12, or both days, please ring Marion Taylor (03) 568 0253.

### Friends of the Briars

On Sunday, 10th May, the Friends of Coolart are inviting the Friends of the Briars to enjoy a barbecue lunch and a day at Coolart.

We would like as many Friends as possible to join us on this day.

As you will see from the report on our visit to the Briars, the area has a lot in common with Coolart and we hope to form links with their Friends' group.

Why not pack a barbecue lunch and make this a family day at Coolart?

### Know your local State Parks

There are many interesting long and short walking tracks in the State Parks on the peninsula. How many Friends know the Eatons Cutting and Kings Waterfall tracks in the Nepean State Park, or the Bushranger Bay track in the Cape Shank Coastal Park? There are a number of others in the area and none of them would pose much difficulty for most Friends, young or old.



If sufficient Friends are interested the Committee will arrange a day program of group walks later in the year. There will be a sheet on the noticeboard in the Friends' room - please add your name to the list if you are interested in the project.

#### Friends of Nyerimilang

In Spring we hope to arrange a weekend visit to Coolart by this Friends' group. Some overnight accomodation may be needed. More details will be given later, but, if you have a spare room and would be willing to offer accomodation perhaps you could let Marion Taylor know.

#### REPORTS

##### Art Exhibition

Coolart's first wildlife exhibition proved popular with artists and visitors alike, with about one third of the exhibits being sold.

##### Christmas in the Stables

More Friends than ever before attended this family function. We were sorry that Graham and Sue Pizzey were not able to be present but they sent their best wishes to all Friends.

##### Coloured Sheep Breeder's Association

This display and demonstration of shearing, spinning, dying and weaving has become an annual event at Coolart, and visitors enjoyed a fascinating and informative day.

An exhibition of beautifully dyed silks and woollens prepared by Mary Hart-Davis was also on show in the House.

##### Jazz Night at Coolart

Once again the Rotary Club of Hastings held their annual jazz night on the lawns at Coolart. The evening was crisp and fine and more than six hundred visitors enjoyed an evening of jazz in these beautiful surroundings.

Coolart will receive about \$800 as their share of the profits.

##### Visit to the Briars

Members of the Friends' Committee and several other Friends had the opportunity to see over the Briars in January and were interested to see the differences and similarities between the two reserves.

The Briars in Mt Martha is one of Victoria's early pioneer homesteads and combines both historic and architectural interest with landscape and environmental importance.

The Balcome family who were the original owners had an historical link with Napoleon and some of the furniture dates from this time.

More recently the Mornington Council have been constructing dams and artificial lakes for waterfowl and other birds and have built several hides overlooking these wetlands.

By developing closer associations between Coolart and the Briars so that each can complement the other, Friends can help to increase awareness of the importance to everyone of these beautiful wetland areas.

#### ROSTERS

Blank rosters are included with this newsletter. Please return them if you can help.



Linda and I would like to wish all Friends a happy new year, already made happy for us with the arrival of Phillip Ross on New Years Eve, weighing in at 8 lb 1½ oz. Mother and son are both well and Linda is off work for the rest of January. Many thanks to all the Friends who sent cards and gifts, and to Marion Taylor for the lovely flowers and a carry-cot on behalf of the Friends.

My feet have hardly touched the ground so far this year, but I'll try to report on recent happenings.

1986 proved to be another successful year for Coolart. We had 34 inches of rain to keep the gardens green, the new trees growing and the wetlands full. You will have noticed in Brian's reports what a good year it was for birds. And to keep us on our toes, 31500 visitors came to enjoy Coolart. Once again, I would like to thank our volunteer helpers for a wonderful effort and for your friendliness. Coolart is all the more delightful for the happy faces on duty and I hope that more of the Friends are able to come to share an ever-increasing workload.

I mentioned in my last report about the treeplanting in 1986. Friends continued in December to bring the total to 2000 trees for the year. A tremendous achievement! Much of the broad-acre planting has now been completed, but we hope to continue with a greater range of shrubs and ground-covers. The CEP Arboretum project finishes at the end of January and we have come to realise that the work is just beginning. The entrance road area has been landscaped with three ornamental ponds, and many trees, shrubs and ground-covers have been planted. But I can see us going for years to complete the project. Propagation will continue, more selectively now, and we propose each Saturday and Sunday in April for planting either in the arboretum or to replace summer losses in the Panhandle area. We reserved weekends in April and October last year with great success and I hope all interested Friends will reserve a page or two in their diaries for April this year.

The education project has been a resounding success also. Mandy has prepared mountains of activity materials for schools so the children should certainly be busy this year. During January, Mandy has been running holiday activities for kids with birdwatching, games, scavenger hunts, and art and crafts. The program has been very rewarding and booked out each day. The Committee has decided to keep Mandy on as an education officer for three days each week to run similar activities on weekends through the year and to organise school visits.

1987 could be a very busy year. The Committee have applied for CEP funds to restore the farmyard, develop the garden, undertake scientific and historical surveys, and to build a visitor centre near the carpark. If your Warden looks a little jaded this year, he'll have a good excuse!

New members July 1 to December 31.

Ruth Cramond, Mr and Mrs N. Wilson, Mrs Helga Fish, Mr and Mrs D. Shield, Mr and Mrs A. Nuttall, Mr and Mrs D. Gatiss and family, June Binks, Mrs S. Rodeck, Mr and Mrs G. Dutneall, Mrs M. Cumming, M. and B. Jeram, Mr and Mrs K. Trace, the Miller family, Mrs P. Hawkins, the Mentz family, Mr and Mrs J. McMillan, W. and M. Darby, B. Williams, Mr R. Cooper and family, Mr R. Myluis and Mrs C. Booth-Myluis, Margaret and Melinda Mills, ann Scott and family, Ms M. Noonan.



BIRD REPORT from Brian Thomas, Assistant Warden

Birdwatching is always interesting and enjoyable but sometimes we are lucky enough to be witness to something that is quite unusual or else rarely seen. So it was one Saturday morning as I was undertaking my weekly survey of the waterfowl on the Lagoon.

Out of the dense undergrowth amongst the paperbarks swam a beautiful male Blue Billed Duck in full breeding plumage, his body coloured a rich chestnut, his head jet black, and the bill from which he gets his name a bright slate blue; a sight which in itself was enough to make you catch your breath. But there was more to come. After a few moments a female arrived on the scene and the male's reaction to her appearance was spectacular.

He immediately began bobbing his head up and down while holding his fanned-out tail erect. Then, raising his body upright and fluffing up his feathers to make himself appear larger, he made a tremendous splash as he belly-flopped onto the water. A series of excited head-dipping movements followed, his head getting completely immersed beneath the surface of the water. After this the head was jerked backwards several times and then slowed to the head-bobbing with which the whole sequence began. The display ended in a beautifully smooth dive. And the female's reaction? Unlike me she was unimpressed - a curt nod to her suitor and she turned and swam away.

Three male and two female Blue Bills have been seen on the Lagoon this summer and many visitors have been lucky enough to watch them as they dive for their food, scarcely making a ripple on the water as they do so. They stay submerged usually for about 15 seconds, sometimes reappearing a surprisingly long distance away.

But birdwatching is not a continual search for the rare or unusual. The common garden birds can be just as fascinating, like the Grey Fantails who built their delicate nest of plant fibres plastered together with spider webs in a quiet well sheltered corner of the garden. The nest site was well chosen, as torrential rain which destroyed the nest of another pair left this one undamaged. Progress at the nest site was watched with great interest by the workers at Coolart, especially after the eggs hatched and three little heads could be seen wobbling about as they begged for food. Demanding little squeaks could be heard when one of the parents returned with some food, but in between time the chicks waited quietly and patiently.

Their growth was rapid and at the end of two weeks the nest looked ridiculously small for the three youngsters now spilling over its edge. A few more days and they would be joining their parents hunting insects and delighting visitors on Coolart's stately lawns.

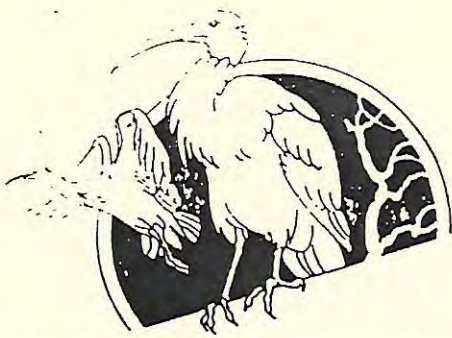
#### 1987 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership subscriptions for the Friends of Coolart are now due. They may be posted to Coolart, returned with your week-end duty rosters, or paid directly to the shop.

A reminder notice and a tear-off slip are enclosed with this newsletter. Please be sure to return the slip with your payment.

You will be pleased to note that there is no increase in the cost of membership. Friends of Coolart give so generously of their time and interest that it was decided that they should not be asked to pay more for their annual subscription.





# Friends of Coolart

JUNE 1987

NEWSLETTER 2/87

EDITOR M. Taylor

Dear Friend of Coolart,

The first months of 1987 have been busy and eventful for Coolart. Much discussion has centred around plans for a visitor centre or entrance station proposed for the lower (house) end of the car-park.

An application has been made for CEP funds to build this centre, which would incorporate offices, toilets, an admissions, information and sales area, and an under-cover assembly point for school or other large groups. If the CEP application is not successful, other sources of possible funding will be explored.

Meanwhile the Committee of Management has sought expert advice on the role and functions of the House if such a centre is built.

## TOUCHWOOD EXHIBITION

I haven't had a cold this winter! Touch wood!

How many times have you said this, or something like it, and do you know the origin of this expression 'Touch wood'?

A fascinating exhibition in the upstairs gallery rooms at Coolart will give you a host of interesting snippets about the origins of such expressions, and about some of the curious superstitions which were believed by our ancestors.

Many of these related to flowers and herbs - Forget-me-nots meant true love; put a two-leafed clover in your shoe and the first unmarried woman you met would be your future wife!

The exhibition was originally mounted in the Botanic Gardens and will be at Coolart until September. There is an excellent booklet, cost \$1.50, describing many customs and their origins, as well as giving interesting information about some of the plants associated with these beliefs.

This is a touch, lift-up, smell and peep-through experience, and your children, (or your grand-children), would find it just as enjoyable as would you.

## BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB EXTENDED TOURS

The B.O.C's Extended Tour for 1987 is to Far North Queensland and will visit Cairns, the Cape York Peninsula and Iron Range, and presents a unique opportunity for members to visit an inaccessible, isolated area which is extremely rich in bird life.



The idea behind these tours is to provide the greatest amount of birdwatching for the lowest feasible cost, and to that end bush camps, good camp cooking and ample time for walking are included in the normal planning. On the 1987 trip, however, accommodation in Cairns will be in a lodge providing twin rooms and shared facilities.

There will be two trips, 22 August - 12 September, and 12 September - 3 October, each spending several days in and around Cairns visiting the Waterfront and the Atherton Tableland before flying further north to meet with the ground tour operator. Travel will then be by road, or track, towards the Tip and returning by a different route where possible. It is planned to stay at least four days in or close to Iron Range National Park, where the rainforest vegetation along the rivers provides magnificent habitat.

For further information regarding membership and bookings, send a stamped self-addressed envelope (at least 9ins X 5ins) to Virginia Morrison, B.O.C. Extended Tours Organiser, P.O.Box 414, Carlton South, 3053.

#### REPORTS ON FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES

##### Visit From the Briars

Although we were disappointed that members of Friends of the Briars were unable to join us on May 10, we were very pleased to welcome two families from the Mornington Shire's Wetlands Project staff. A shared barbecue lunch was followed by visits to the hides, hearing the Warden's talk, and exploring the Woodlands Walk. Our visitor assured us that they thoroughly enjoyed their day and would be happy to join us again later in the year. Friends of the Briars also plan to visit Coolart near the end of the year.

##### French Island Visit

On 11 April Friends of Coolart once again visited French Island under the guidance of Des Quinn, Co-ordinator of the Friends of French Island. 25 Friends walked around the foreshore from the Barge Landing to Rams Island, taking about 4 hours on the trip. Some of the more intrepid scrambled up the cliff to eat lunch on one of the headlands, ( and to provide lunch for some very hungry French Island mosquitoes). Others kept both feet firmly on the ground.

The weather was beautiful and there was plenty of interesting bird and plant life. Bus transport to and from the ferry was provided by Alan Chandler, as well as a delightful afternoon tea of homemade scones and cakes made by Alan's wife and served in their home overlooking the bay.

##### 3rd Friends' of National Parks Conference, March 7 - 9

The National Fitness Centre Camp at Howman's Gap, near Falls Creek, was the setting for this conference attended by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Ms Joan Kirner, who flew in for the opening sessions, Mr Don Saunders, Director, National Parks and Wildlife, and representatives from many of the Friends of various national parks in Victoria. Coolart, although not a national park, was also represented.

Much of the discussion centred around the scarcity of rangers and support staff in national parks, and on the future role of friends' groups. There is an increasing concern about lack of communication and direction from parks' staff to friends' groups, who are then uncertain where to concentrate their efforts.



## WARDEN'S REPORT by Steve Yorke

As I sit here, heater turned up against the freezing May weather outside, I realise how quickly the months have flown by since the last newsletter. Phillip, already five months old and thriving, is shaping as a real lord of the manor and must be obeyed! Both parents are coping pretty well and our work at Coolart continues, albeit according to Phillip's routine rather than ours.

Fortunately, work became a little less hectic when our CEP project finished in late January, and as yet we have not heard whether our applications for further projects have been successful.

Since January, Mandy has continued to run weekend kids' activities and look after school visits. She has also been working on some new bird identification charts which we hope to surprise you with soon.

House repairs have become a major part of our work this year, since Public Works funds are now paid directly to us. Recently, there has been extensive plaster work in the drawing room and dining room prior to painting and major roof repairs to prevent leaks. Hopefully, no more water in our dining room upstairs! New displays are underway in the Observatory too, and a large scale aerial photo of the entire Reserve has already been installed.

This year we have completed our water control structures on both wetlands. Now, if the elements permit, we can better control water levels and salinity by using piped water from the lagoon or the bore and we expect more birds to use the wetlands in future. 100 native fish were introduced in March to enhance the wetland food chains. Our wetlands and Observatory are improving all the time as described in Brian's report, and our visitors are full of praise. We have even had a letter from Sir Peter Scott at Slimbridge in the UK, asking for details on the use of one-way glass for bird observation.

Treeplanting continued in April thanks to all the Friends who came along. 600 trees and shrubs were planted and with good soaking rains recently, should do well.

Once again, I would like to thank all Friends of Coolart for your support and generous assistance. Linda and I could not manage without you.

## BIRD REPORT by Brian Thomas

Coolart's wetlands have been looking more beautiful than ever during the past few months with the growth of trees and reeds, and natural regeneration of rushes and marsh plants around the edges. Add to this a wealth of bird life and what a fabulous sight you have.

There have been ducks aplenty, thanks no doubt to the opening of the duck hunting season. Large flocks of over 60 wood duck have kept the grass cropped on the lower wetlands while over 180 chestnut teal and black duck dabbled on the upper wetlands. Flotillas of shovelers cruised the waters of the lagoon or loafed idly on semi-submerged logs.

Hoary-headed and Australian grebes spent more time than usual on the lagoon. Mandy and Steve had the good fortune to spot four immature great crested grebes, a very rare sight at Coolart. Rarer still were the four magpie geese which flew in one Sunday - once again I was unlucky and missed seeing them.

Great egrets have been regular visitors. One adult was accompanied by two immature birds and on one occasion, a flock of 20 flew over the wetlands. A lone cattle egret spent several days stalking frogs and insects on the island in front of the Observatory, and three were seen living up to their names feeding amongst the cattle in the paddocks.

A new species was spotted on Coolart's smallest wetland - the garden pond, not



a bird this time, but a frog. Credit for the discovery must go to my two-year-old son Owen, who spotted it sitting motionless on a rock. Two others were sitting close by, each coloured green and gold, although the markings on each differed considerably. They were photographed by Steve and later identified as green swamp frogs - a remarkably unimaginative name for a strikingly beautiful animal. So when next you visit Coolart, don't neglect our miniature wetland; there might just be something there waiting to be discovered!

#### NEW RESIDENTS AT COOLART by Ian Taylor

On Saturday, 11 April, fifteen sugar-gliders were released at Coolart. Des Hackett, breeder and protector of possums, brought them in home-made but effective nest-boxes, each opening prudently covered with chicken-wire. An inquisitive large eye could sometimes be glimpsed within.

Together with a reporter and photographer from 'The Age', glider boxes, ladders and tools, we bumped along a track to the 'Panhandle, which will be their home.

Steve, climbing intrepidly by ladder, nailed the nest-boxes high in the branches of two manna-gums. Des concocted (with suitable muttered incantations) his special sugar-glider tucker, containing jam, condensed milk, and honey, in plastic icecream tubs which were nailed up near the nests. While not exactly gourmet for mere humans - it left us sticky all over - it is very nutritious and will serve as food for the gliders until they venture forth and forage for themselves. In time they will move out of the boxes and make homes for themselves in tree-hollows in the area.

Steve removed the the chicken-wire to free the new arrivals, looking a little apprehensive, (like a scaled-up Harry Butler poking his arm down a snake-hole), lest one leap into his beard as an alternative life-style. But they were too shy to appear - they are, after all, nocturnal.

They have been seen in the area several times at dusk since their release. Within a few years we hope we will have as large a population as was probably at Coolart in the past.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS - A REMINDER

Some Friends' annual subscriptions are still outstanding since January. If you cannot remember whether or not you have paid, please check by ringing Coolart, 059 821333, during working hours.

#### ROSTERS

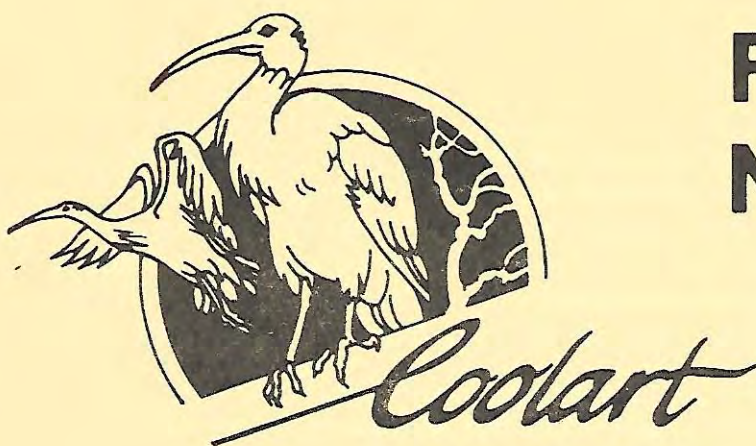
Enclosed with this newsletter are two blank roster sheets - green for Saturdays and white for Sundays - to cover the months of June to September. While winter is a quieter time for Coolart we still need your help and support. Please fill in and return the sheets if you are able to assist during this period.

#### 3rd Friends' of National Parks Conference (Cont from P 2)

Another issue which must be faced is the attitude of some unions towards volunteer groups, who are seen as doing work for which union members could be paid.

Although it proved too cold to have a Sunday barbecue lunch on the High Plains as planned, some of us were able to join a car convey which visited the well-known scenic spots and the historic ski huts in this beautiful 'top of the world' region.





# FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

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NOVEMBER 1987

NEWSLETTER 4/87

EDITOR M. TAYLOR

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Dear Friend of Coolart,

It's hard to believe that the year is nearly over and Christmas is so close. 1987 has been a busy time for Coolart with new projects starting and new staff arriving.

If you haven't visited recently, make up your mind to come during the spring and summer and see all the changes. Perhaps you would like to join in one or two of the activities listed below in 'Dates for Your Diary'.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas, and a successful and peaceful New Year.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friends of Coolart Annual General Meeting. Sunday, 15th November, at 2.30pm.

All Friends are invited to attend this meeting in the Observatory at Coolart. Enclosed with this newsletter is the agenda for the meeting and a nomination form for the Friends' Committee, members of which are elected at the AGM.

Christmas in the Stables. Saturday, 12th December, at 4.00pm.

Our annual event will start with a conducted walk around the reserve, led by one or both of the Wardens. Barbecues will be ready at 5.30pm, followed by Christmas carols, accompanied by the organ and, probably, the pipes. At the end of the evening supper will be served in the House. All Friends and their families are invited to join in this Christmas celebration.

Visit from Friends of the Briars. Sunday, 29th November, at 12.00 noon.

Bring a barbecue lunch and meet the Friends of The Briars and the Wetlands Project staff.

The Friends' Committee are planning other activities for 1988, and these will be announced in the January newsletter. Please let the Committee know if you, as a group of Friends, have some ideas about what you would like to do.



## ANNUAL REPORT - FRIENDS OF COOLART

Many new Friends have joined during 1987 and, together with 'old' Friends, have helped to maintain a high level of service to Coolart. In addition to staffing service points on weekends, extra help was needed during the week when Coolart commenced opening every day. Large numbers of Friends have been involved with general working parties, or have undertaken special projects such as the Plant Shop, refurbishing old equipment, or catering for exhibition openings.

Friends of Coolart were represented at the Third Biennial Friends of National Parks Conference at Howmans Gap in March, and attended as observers at the recent Victorian Wetlands Trust meeting at Coolart.

The Friends' Committee has met 10 times during 1987 including 2 joint meetings with the Coolart Committee of Management. A variety of issues have been considered, and where appropriate, opinions and suggestions have been passed on to the Committee of Management. These issues have included the method of recording shop sales, replacement of the bridge over the creek, entrance/exit from the carpark, signs at road junctions, the visitors' centre, incorporation of the committee, and levels of membership.

Membership of the Friends' Committee remained substantially the same as for 1986, with the exception of Mr. Graeme Enting who did not seek re-election. Mr. Eric Grant joined the Committee and during the year Mr. Bruce Benton resigned. Our thanks go to Graeme and Bruce for their efforts during their time on the Committee.

The Committee have organised functions for Friends throughout the year, including several trips to French Island, a visit from some of the Briars Wetlands staff, and the ever popular Christmas in the Stables.

## NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN, COOLART COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

by Gordon Cameron

Coolart Committee is now a Corporation

We have been waiting for quite some considerable time but at last the news has come of the announcement in the Victorian Government Gazette on 14 October that the Committee of Management had been declared to be a Corporation with the name 'Coolart Committee of Management Incorporated' and that Gordon Cameron had been declared to be the Chairman of the Corporation. This change of legal status will help the Committee in some of its financial dealings, and also provides a degree of protection from personal legal liability for public risk accidents which could arise during the course of the Committee's activities. This has in the past been of some concern to our Friends in their work at the Reserve.

Welcome to Our New Staff Member

BRENDA JERICH0 joined us a few weeks ago as 'Administrative Assistant'. Already she has been making her presence felt with the organisation of two art exhibitions and the attendant publicity, as well as the special function held for the family of the late Tom Luxton. Brenda's cheerful nature has been remarked upon by all those who have met her. Good luck Brenda!



## Luxton's Fifty Years Association

The 6th September marked the fiftieth anniversary of the purchase of Coolart property by the late Tom Luxton. To mark the occasion the Committee entertained his children and their spouses to afternoon tea on Saturday, 26th September. Gordon Cameron spoke of the debt of gratitude that was owed to Tom Luxton for his foresight in establishing the lagoon to its present status, and the value to the people of Victoria in having such a significant wildlife reserve in such close proximity to Melbourne. The Luxton family were delighted with the way that Coolart is being continued in the tradition of their father's ideals.

## Art Exhibitions

We have recently had two very successful art exhibitions. In September Dr. Hugh Wirth opened a display of drawings by Ninon Phillips. This was the first exhibition of work by Ninon for some years and was greatly appreciated by her past admirers as well as the many visitors who had an opportunity to see her work for the first time. Ninon has promised to work towards another exhibition at Coolart in the near future.

We had well-known artist and naturalist Charles McCubbin to open the second annual Wildlife Art Exhibition on Saturday, 24 October. This exhibition will continue until early December and we recommend a visit by those who have not already seen it. The standard of the exhibits is extremely high and you will find that you will be most impressed.

To complete our art activities for this year, another exhibition, this time of paintings by Vida Pearson, is to open on 12 December. This is just in time for some last minute shopping for that special Christmas present.

## LETTER FROM OUR NEW ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - BRENDA JERICO

Dear Friends of Coolart,

It's now 8 weeks since I started work with you all at Coolart, so I think it's time to say "Thank You!" for taking care of me and making me feel so welcome, and also to tell you a little about myself, as Marion suggested.

So Hi! - from South Australia! Yes, Coolart has acquired yet another 'import'. I was born and bred on a dairy farm on South Eastern Eyre Peninsula (near Port Lincoln) at a little place called Koppio. There's a great Smithy Museum there, where my Dad spends a lot of his time tinkering with old machinery. Please call in and say hello if ever you're that far from home.

Most of my spare time as a kid was spent wandering through our beautiful quiet bushland, and I think perhaps that's where a long-standing love of nature developed.

At 16 I matriculated and left home (sniff!) to take up studies in Adelaide. Over the next few years I worked and studied in a variety of places, and spent some time discovering the many national parks within reach of central Adelaide. I came to Mornington, Victoria, in '86 to continue Christian Youth Work - and having discovered the Peninsula, I plan to stay! It is very much like home here, and I'm having great fun getting to know both the people and the places. I think the only thing missing is that lovely 100° heat in summer!!!



I love the beach, (and want to learn to sail this summer - beware, all you ocean-goers!), as well as eating out, cycling, squash, aerobics, bushwalking, snow-skiing, music and piano, different handcrafts, reading, open fires, gardens, animals of all shapes and sizes, but I have a phobia of spiders. Agh! The secrets of birdwatching are gradually unfolding to me - averaging one new bird a week

Well, I hope that fills you in a little bit on me - I'm looking forward to meeting more of you as I work here.

PS - PLEASE - if there is anyone who can help out in the shop on weekdays, don't hesitate to give either Jo Eabry or myself a call.

Thanks again for your patience, and I hope to see you in the Stables for Christmas.

Brenda.

BOOK REVIEW - 'Your garden birds', by Ellen McCulloch.

Having recently started the first Bird Study Class at Coolart I was delighted to receive a copy of this book. The author says her aim is to provide enjoyment for part-time bird watchers, and adds that it may perhaps just lure the reader to take up the activity as a more serious hobby.

This is a book about fun, which is what watching birds should be all about, and consists of a series of short articles on all sorts of exciting things that just may happen in YOUR garden if you are aware of what to be looking for. The do's and don'ts are tactfully presented, and there are many suggestions which are sure to help make your part-time activity more satisfying.

Ellen's seven years as Secretary of the Bird Observers Club has provided her with a wealth of experience on which to draw in writing this book. The standard of the photographs (mostly by Keith Richards) is excellent, which makes it altogether a very satisfying book to browse through in those odd moments. You will soon find that you have also been educated without being aware of the message being sent to you.

Buy one for yourself and give one for Christmas. Ask at the Coolart shop.

McCulloch, Ellen. Your garden birds. Melbourne, Hyland House, 1987(?) \$19.95 .

NEW FRIENDS OF COOLART - 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 1987

We welcome the following who became Friends during the first six months of the year. We are most grateful for your support and hope that you will be able to enjoy the many and varied beauties of Coolart well into the future.

Jean and Albert Aird, John and Mary Hart-Davies, Michael and Helen Slee and family, Mrs Joan Crockford, Ernest and Elizabeth Smith, Peter and Jennifer Rumble, Mr and Mrs Peter Heffernan, Mr and Mrs David Nolan, Mr and Mrs Bennett, Mrs Jean Jackson, Russ and Alison Nicholson, Dr and Mrs Don Weiss, Leo and Dorothy Tucker, L. and E. Roadknight, Mr and Mrs Ron wearner, David and Katrina Chalke and family, Miss Hazel Shepherdly, Mr V. Gibbins and family,

(Cont. on P. 6)



THIS PAGE IS SPONSORED BY THE BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

For enquiries re. membership please contact the Secretary, B.O.C., PO Box 185, Nunawading, 3131. A leaflet 'Attracting Butterflies to Gardens in Temperate Australia' is available on request.

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## IBISES ARE FULL OF SURPRISES

by Kim Lowe

(Reproduced by kind permission of the author. Dr. Kim Lowe is Co-ordinator of the Australian Bird Banding Scheme, National Parks and Wildlife, Canberra.)

Ibises are probably best known for their role in controlling agricultural pests and their place as a god symbol in Egyptian mythology. Interestingly, the white-plumaged ibis of Australia is known for both roles. It is clear that ibises can eat large numbers of pasture pests and this has led to their affectionate title as the farmer's friend. It is not clear why the ibis was chosen as one of the symbols of the Egyptian god Thoth, nor is it clear to me why our Australian white ibis should be recognised as a form of the Sacred Ibis, of which the African form was revered. Ornithological nomenclature is a tricky business!

Sacred Ibises have many interesting attributes which are not widely known. My studies began at Phillip Island in Victoria, where the birds feed in pastures throughout most of the year, taking such "pests" as cockchafer, caterpillars and grasshoppers as well as the occasional frog and many, many earthworms. These food types prepare them for and sustain them through their annual breeding season. Phillip Islanders often told me about the large colony of ibises at Rhyll Swamp and how the breeding coincided with the flowering of the paperbark trees in which they nested. It was coincidence alone, for clearly Sacred Ibises are not the largest honeyeaters in the world!

At Rhyll, Sacred Ibises breed alongside Straw-necked Ibises, Royal Spoonbills, Little Pied Cormorants, Chestnut Teal and the occasional Musk Duck. Both ibises lay 2 to 4 eggs per clutch but there is a high attrition rate and, on average, less than one young survives to fly from the nest.

Some of the first Sacred Ibises banded in this country were banded at Rhyll Swamp. The banding showed an apparent anomaly - some birds born at Rhyll flew as far as Papua New Guinea and yet many birds were found breeding in their natal area. Perhaps ibis can be independent thinkers, with opinion varying about whether to stay at home! Almost certainly Sacred Ibis are sedentary as adults. The banding at Rhyll has also revealed that they may live for over 18 years. They seem to first breed at two or three years old and so may have up to 16 breeding years. However, banding data indicate that nearly all live less than 10 years and not many wrinkles are seen on those bare-skinned heads.

No matter how many years they live, they get up to all sorts of tricks when they breed. Before my studies it was thought the Sacred Ibis formed simple pairs and that breeding was quite routine. However my work with a population of ibises at Healesville Fauna Park, putting unique combinations of coloured plastic bands on their legs, revealed a totally different story. Simple pairs were common, but so were extramarital affairs - brief though they were. Frequently, birds quietly dozing as they incubated their eggs or brooding their young in the breeding colony would be snapped awake by a copulation between two of their "neighbours". Some seemed to be involved in these affairs more often than others. The significance of the action is a mystery. That wasn't



all - mated trios (one male and two females) of birds were recorded. That is, one male seemed to be simultaneously fathering young at two nests. Polygamy (many females) - to use the jargon - was the last breeding strategy that would have been expected. Research is continuing into these and other tantalizing happenings. Next time you see one of these holy ibises, pause to imagine a little about its life-style. If you see one wearing leg bands please let me know about it - it might be on holidays from Rhyll or Healesville!

(Editor's Note. It might also be from Coolart. We have been banding ibis here for several years and some Coolart ibis have been observed well outside Victoria.)

#### POLLY WOODSIDE BIRD SANCTUARY

by Betty Cromb

(Reproduced by kind permission from 'Wave', the journal of the Melbourne Maritime Museum, Cnr. Phayer and Normanby Rds, South Melbourne.)

Probably there have always been sea and water birds about the Dock but since the native trees have been planted and flourished we have quite a variety of land-based birds either visiting or resident here.

Among our regulars or residents we have Silver Gulls, Cormorants (black and pied), Black Ducks, Mallards, Mudlarks, Wagtails, White-plumed Honeyeaters (Greenies), Welcome Swallows, Indian Mynahs, Starlings, Sparrows, Turtle Doves, Australian Ravens (Crows), Red Wattle-birds, Little Wattle-birds, Masked Plovers, and lately, White Ibis which feed on the grass near 'The Melbourne Lighter'.

Until the little dock was cleared we were often visited by a Nankeen Night Heron as well as White Egrets, White-faced Herons, and one Kingfisher. Less often we have seen Caspian and Crested Terns and once a Fairy Tern; also a Nankeen Kestrel and a large brown Goshawk.

Lin has been a great help bird spotting - even seeing a pair of Cockatoos on the main topsail brace. No prizes, but can anyone beat that!

Stefan and Betty keep a register of bird sightings and would welcome reports from anyone.

#### NEW FRIENDS OF COOLART - 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 1987 (Continued from P. 4)

Mr J. W. Hebden and family, Miss Jean Haigh, Dr M. C. Deland and family, Mrs Diana Merry, Mr and Mrs Connard, Mr and Mrs K.A. Smith, Miss E. Walters, Tom Burchell, Miss Jean Hogg, Judy Forrester, Peter Jack, Peter Struthers, Loraine Dodgshun, Group Capt. and Mrs A. T. Cadd, Ms Robyn Allison, Mr and Mrs C. Hayes, Mr and Mrs Reg Hamilton, Miss Heather Phiddian, Lynne and Peter Cox, Ross and Carmel Huggard, Sister Anne Manning.

We also welcome all those Friends who joined in the second half of the year. They will be listed individually in our next newsletter in January, when we hope the list will be even longer than this one. Thank you to new and old Friends for all your help - we do appreciate it.



WATER

by Les Robb

Water, for most parts of Australia, is our most precious commodity.

As a small child 'Don't waste water' was a frequent command, and the memory of the value of the contents of the silver corrugated iron tanks close to the kitchen door is sharply etched on my mind. I soon realized that, on hot, north wind days when the sky was filled with 'Mallee Dust', lack of water was one of the reasons, and the joy when the rain fell, although everything was covered with red dust, was something I thought the whole world shared.

Many years later, on my first visit to the northern hemisphere, I found that water was taken for granted - there was a fascination with the sight of so much water everywhere I travelled, which brought home to me the difficulties of our early pioneering settlers.

In the summer the moisture in the air is ever present on lovely sunny days, with a haze over the countryside, and the beauty of the colours in the flowers which, as they are not stressed by hot winds, does not fade or wilt. The grass is always so green and the colours in the forests and parks are a patchwork of shades of green.

One time, whilst visiting the Aberdeen Gardens, I noticed the rhododendrons were wilting and there seemed to be no watering system. I asked one of the gardeners how the plants were watered, to which he replied, 'It comes from the heavens, we don't need a watering system. We are having a drought this year. It hasn't rained for six weeks, but the rain will be here in a day or two'. He was right.

In the same year we also visited the Isle of Skye (often called 'The Misty Isle'). The grasses were beautiful in the sunlight - a mass of golds, browns, and greens, reminding me of my grandmother's 'heather mixture' wool. We decided to walk across the fields towards the coast, but, within fifty yards of leaving the path, we were up to our ankles in mud - in a year of drought? It was a sharp reminder that drought has a different meaning in Scotland. However, there was much jubilation as that year the peat would dry quickly. Of course, peat to northern Scotland is most important as it supplies the winter warmth, and if you have never smelt a peat fire, it is a pleasure for future enjoyment.

Touring through Britain, my greatest delight is the endless number of beautiful gardens, and the love of gardens here, I am sure, has been handed down from our previous generations. We have much to be proud of in our dry land for our gardens too are beautiful - our Botanical Gardens rated third in the world classification - a triumph to the planning and caring of the many species, with the recycling of water for the dry summer months.

Though our forests have a sameness of blue-green, with our many species of eucalypts, no where else in the world is a tree so well adapted to a climate where the forests survive through drought, flood, and fire.

'I love a sunburnt country . . . . '



The orchid family has more species than any other plant family, and various authorities place the number between 15000 and 30000. The difficulty in finding an accurate figure arises from the many "species" created by orchid breeding enthusiasts throughout the world. Despite their proliferation, and apart from their horticultural use, only one species is used commercially - vanilla beans are the seed pods of an orchid from South America.

The fantastic forms and colours of orchids, as well as their cosmopolitan distribution, give them an enormous popularity amongst botanists, horticulturalists and gardeners alike.

Orchids are found throughout the world, even in the semi-arid zones and above the Arctic Circle, but most are found in the tropics where they reach a bewildering array of sizes, colours and forms. When Linda and I travelled a few years ago, we visited Kinabalu National Park in Sabah (formerly North Borneo). In a park of only 30000 hectares, more than one thousand species had been documented, and the rangers estimate that there might be another thousand as yet undiscovered! To us orchid fans, the clearing and destruction of tropical rainforests is sheer madness. What will history think of a generation who destroyed entire species and who didn't even know they were there?

The huge variety of orchids exists because of their often extreme specialisation to the multitude of ecological niches which occur throughout the world. Many orchids are very sensitive to ecological change, and can be destroyed by minor changes in their microclimate. Fertilisers, grazing, soil erosion, canopy removal and weeds can cause their demise, just as effectively as land alienation or earthmoving operations for industry, construction or quarrying.

In Australia, there are more than 600 species of orchids, most of which are endemic. All orchids are perennial plants, belonging to two major groups: terrestrial and epiphytic.

Terrestrial orchids have perennial tubers or rhizomes, but the leaves and flowers appear as annuals. Terrestrials are typical of southern Australia and are believed to have their origin in ancient Gondwanaland. As the tropics are approached, the terrestrials give way to epiphytes, which have migrated from southern Asia.

Epiphytic orchids are not parasitic; they use trees or rocks only as a support and feed from humus trapped amongst its roots. Those that grow on trees are called dendrophytes and, because they attach themselves to fissured or creviced bark, are not found on trees which shed their bark like many of the eucalypts. In Victoria, our three species are found in rainforest gullies in the east and south of the state. They are the beautiful but tiny Tangle Orchid and the more showy Butterfly and Orange-blossom Orchids. There are also two Victorian species which grow on rocks. The lithophytes, as they are called, are the Streaked Rock Orchid and the Rock Lily, which occur only in far East Gippsland.

Terrestrial orchids are divided into those which have green leaves and chlorophyll, and those which contain no chlorophyll. The latter group are called saprophytes, plants which feed from non-living organic material with the help of a symbiotic relationship with a soil fungus. Such symbiosis is also used to some degree by other orchids, and fungi also play a major role in seed germination. Recently, native orchids have been grown in pots by sowing the talcum-like seed onto the correct fungus, and by this method, orchids facing extinction might be saved.



The saprophytes include some of the most unusual orchids in the world. Two unique orchids are the Eastern and Western Australian Underground Orchids, which exist throughout their life cycle entirely under the ground, flower underground and are probably pollinated by burrowing insects.

In Victoria, there are about 150 species of terrestrial or ground orchids, and I am sure most of us would be familiar with greenhoods and spider orchids.

At any time of the year one or another orchid is flowering, but most appear in early to late spring. The perennial part of the plant remains under the surface, safe from harsh weather and from browsing. At just the right moment, one, two, or more leaves emerge to soak up the sun's energy. Flowers follow in abundance some years, but in other years, a particular species might not flower at all. Some orchids, like the Elbow Orchid, are said to flower at regular intervals, in this case seven years; others, like Red Beaks, appear following fires.

Most Victorian orchids are tiny and easily overlooked, but a thorough search, often on hands and knees, is usually rewarded with the discovery of a specimen of exceptional beauty and complexity. Or even a variety or hybrid which does not appear in the literature. At Mallacoota several years ago, I found what I believed to be a Snake Orchid/Wallflower Orchid cross which looked like small brown and yellow aeroplanes flying in precise formation!

Orchids are classified as the highest evolved form of plant life because of their specialised floral structure and their unique, almost "clever" methods of attracting insect pollinators. Orchids are related to the lilies, and have three sepals and three petals. In the lilies, the floral segments are similar, but in orchids they are highly modified and the upper radically so to form the labellum or tongue. In many species, the labellum is beautifully decorated with colourful glands or hairs and plays an important role in pollination.

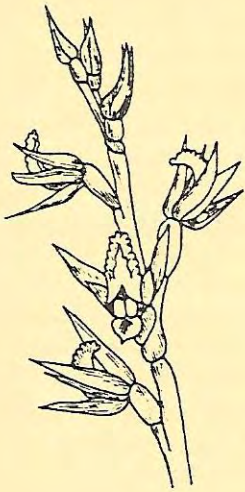
In several species, the labellum has evolved to resemble a particular insect. When a male Thynnidae wasp tries to mate with the tongue of the Elbow Orchid, the insect is physically thrust against the stigma and pollinia - a very effective means of pollen transfer. The Large Tongue Orchid employs a similar technique made all the more effective by the emission of a pheromone, a chemical which makes the flower smell like a female ichneumon wasp. The poor male wasps have been observed fighting over the possession of a flower!

Most of our orchids exhibit such exceptional means of luring insects to assist their spread and survival. I mentioned earlier that some orchids are threatened by slight changes to their environment. Some people believe that the European Honey Bee poses a threat to several orchids which can only be pollinated by a single species of insect. The insect needs nutriment, and if bees monopolise the local nectar supply, that insect may disappear. Bees are physically incapable of pollinating many orchids because of their relatively large size, and those orchids may well miss out on pollination and seed production.

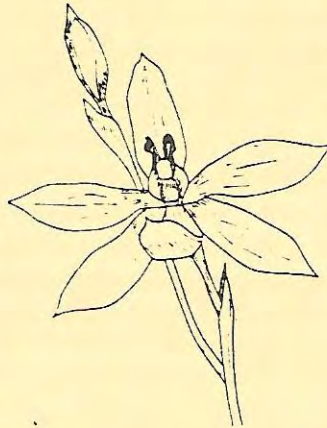
Yet many orchids are extremely hardy, and here at Coolart eight species have survived clearing, grazing and weed infestation. Nodding Greenhoods and Slaty Helmet Orchids flower in winter along the banks of Merricks Creek. Another orchid to flower in winter is the Gnat Orchid. Maroonhoods appear in early spring to be followed by Green-comb Spider Orchids and Pink Fairies on the sandy soils of our coastal woodland. By far the most surprising find has been the discovery of Onion Orchids and Slender Sun-orchids on the highly degraded soils of the Bush Dam area which formed part of the Air Force Camp. Perhaps some species can even survive hob-nail boots!

Your writer could continue for many pages, and I wish a few photos could be printed here to demonstrate the delicate, intricate blooms. I hope to exhibit my orchid photos in Coolart House as soon as we can.

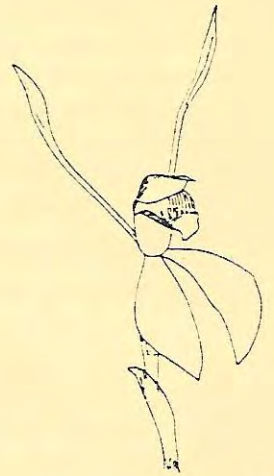




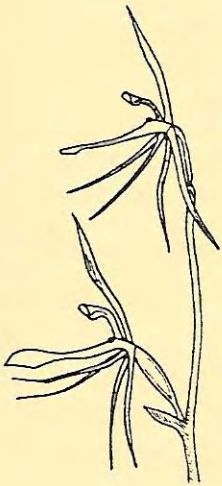
*Prasophyllum odoratum*  
"Sweet Leek-orchid"



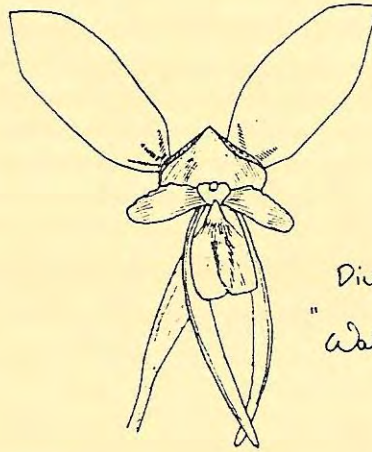
*Thelymitra antennifera*  
"Rabbit-ears"



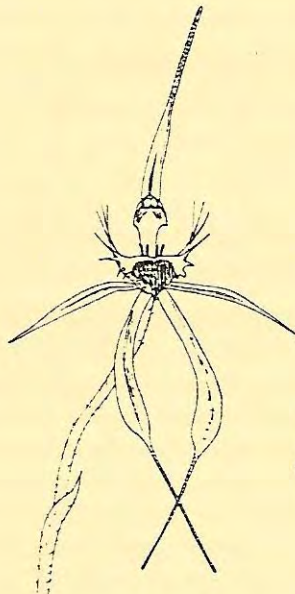
*Caladenia menziesii*  
"Hare Orchid"



*Acianthus reniformis*  
"Gnat Orchid"



*Diuris longifolia*  
"Wallflower Orchid"



*Caladenia dilatata*  
"Green-comb Spider Orchid"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### WEEKEND ROSTERS

Marion Taylor

If there are any Friends who have not yet returned their roster sheets and are able to help on some weekends I would be very pleased to hear from them. There are still a few gaps left to fill. If you cannot commit yourself for a particular day, but would be willing to be contacted at short notice to see if you were available in an emergency, would you also let me know.

Anyone who is interested in helping in the Plant Shop on either week days or weekends, please let Jo Gregory know.