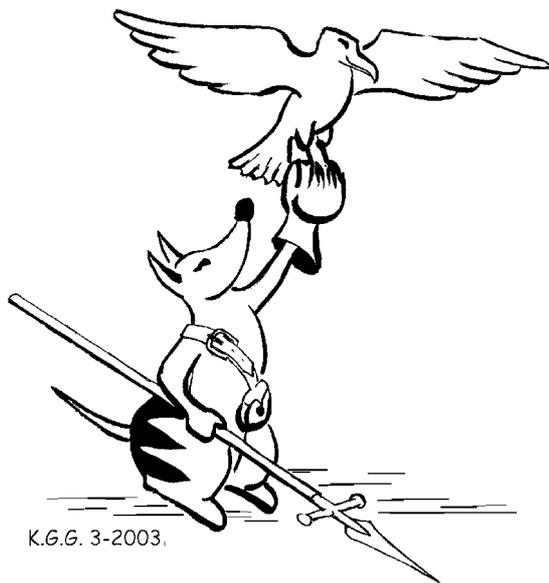




NEWSLETTER, March 2003

HURRY TO HIRL TO HEAR ABOUT HAWKS AND HUNTERS

Here (just in time!) is our Program for 2003.



Our series of Special Meetings begins **THIS THURSDAY** (20 March) with a talk by Martin Scuffins entitled "**The Hawk and the Hunter.**" Martin runs a wildlife shelter, south of Ballarat, which is dedicated to the special needs of raptors. He will be exploring the relationship between birds of prey and people over the centuries, and how the nature of that relationship is changing. The meeting will be at HIRL as usual, beginning at 8 pm.

Those of us who went to Lake Linlithgow in February will be well primed for this talk, as we saw a number of birds of prey including black-shouldered kites and a spotted harrier. This was compensation for the low numbers of water birds, the water being once again very low. There has been an encouraging recovery of native ground-cover plants, now that the sheep have been fenced out as part of Parks Victoria's revegetation project.

The **March Excursion next Saturday** (22nd) will take us back in time and over an electric fence, as we look at fossils on the Muddy Creek site. We hope to provide suitable equipment for scaling the fence in safety, while for time-travelling a hand-lens (or binoculars that can be looked into the wrong way round) will be useful. The shell beds here date from the early Pliocene (about 4-5 million years ago), and overlie an older Miocene unit of marine muds and limestone (which can also have fossils). If we can arrange permission, we may also visit sites on the Grange Burn.

Note that the fossil sites have suffered through the years from over-enthusiastic collecting, and "you-beaut" specimens are now seldom seen. So we are intending to look but not remove anything – no G-picks please !

We shall meet outside the Visitor Information at 9am.

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|---|----------------------------------|
| Hamilton Field Naturalists Club. | Subscription for year: |
| Name: | |
| Address: | |

FAR-AWAY PLACES

Last year several of our members went off to "far-away places with strange sounding names" (try *Jerramungup*, *Sossusvlei* or *Jokulsargljufur!*). Consequently this year's program will include several glimpses into animal, vegetable or mineral life in various parts of the globe (and I say mineral "life" advisedly, having seen what rock in Iceland can get up to.)

The first of these will be on **15 May** when Rod Bird and Dianne Luhrs will tell us about "**Landscapes and Wildlife in Namibia and Botswana**". This should be a night not to be missed, with no doubt lots of brilliant shots of birds, beasts and bumps on the landscape. Later in the year we will hear about the Orkneys, Iceland, Slovenia and – almost as far away – Western Australia.

Note that our speaker for **June** will not be able to confirm his availability until later. If he is unavailable, we will probably have a night of slides from the collection of the late Lionel Elmore. We hope to have another newsletter out in time to let you know about this and to give any other updates on excursions etc. Remember that plans for excursions may need to be changed depending on unpredictables such as weather, so check with one of the committee if you haven't been able to get to the preceding meeting. Which brings us to....

COMMITTEE FOR 2003

This is much like the committee for 2002. The only change is that, after two years of sterling service as Correspondence Secretary, Megan Campbell has handed the goose quill and parchment to Glenys Cayley. We are all grateful to Megan for the excellent job she has done, and to Glenys for nobly volunteering to take over.

Annual membership fees have once again been held to their previous rates of \$15 per person or \$20 for a family -- surely worth it for the cartoons alone! If you haven't paid yet, could you please fill in the form below and either bring it to the March meeting or post it to Ken at PO Box 591.

MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2003

The tiny pile of gold galleons in our vault at Gringotts Bank is apparently not diminishing, thanks to Financial Wizard Grimes, and we have once again been able to hold membership fees to the same level as last year: that is, \$15.00 for an individual or \$20.00 for a family. These fees are now due, so please cut off the attached slip and return it to Ken at the March meeting/excursion or by post.