



NEWSLETTER, March 2014

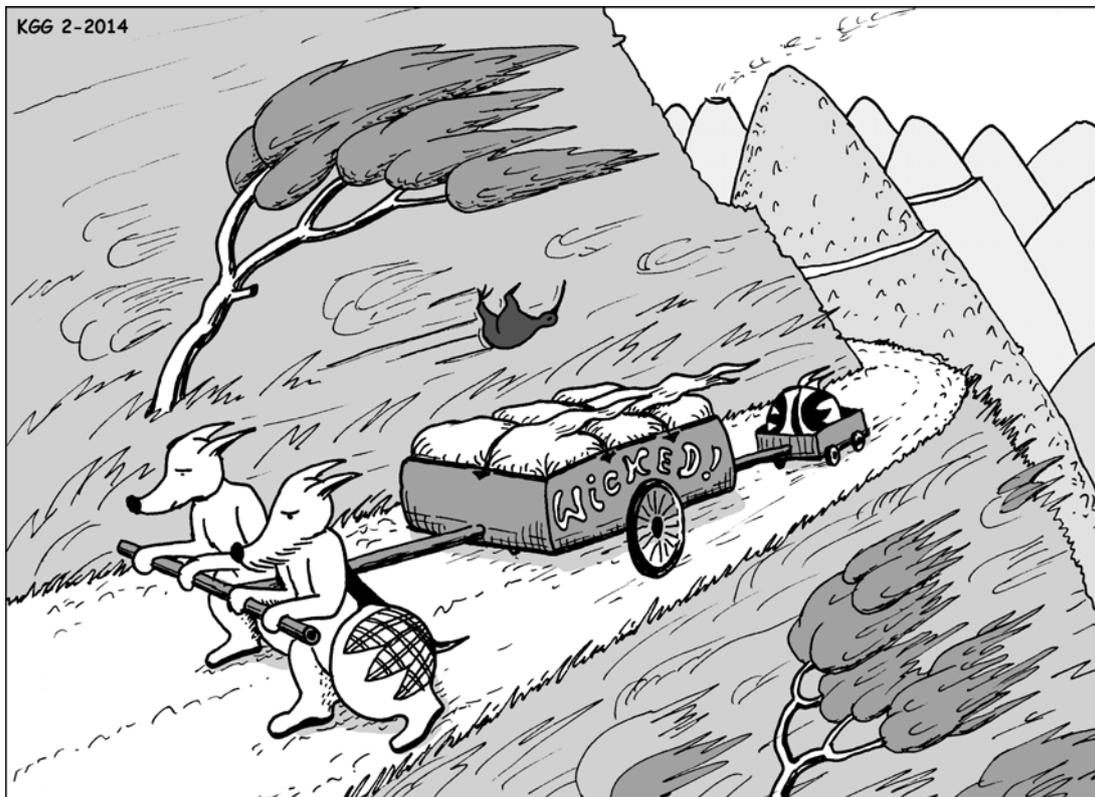
This year has started sadly with the loss of one of our Life Members, Rae Dempster. Rae had been a member of the Club since its early days, and to the end of her life she maintained her interest in it and her passion to care for the natural world. She was a generous person with a great sense of humour. We will miss her.

Enclosed is our Program for the year. We hope it provides something for everyone – presentations on nature at home and abroad; visits to coast, mountain, forest and heath; and working parties to restore a swamp, eliminate weeds and spy on elusive mammals. This year we will try to reduce the time spent on business at our General Meetings by circulating the Minutes by email before-hand, and we'll have a half-hour segment with photos of recent sightings, excursions or projects. So if you have recently managed to photograph the rare-and-endangered crimson-fanged hoop-snake in your garden, bring the shot along.

For information about any of the excursions, contact a committee member, ideally the one whose initials are shown on the Program as the leader for that trip. The committee members are listed on the Program (highly observant readers will note that once again they have not changed.)

MARCH – EAST, WEST AND NORTH

At our **Special Meeting on Thursday 20 March**, we will be exploring the “**Nature of New Zealand**” with Dave and Lyn Munro, following their trip around the North Island last year. Asked for the most exciting part, they nominated driving a small campervan on a narrow winding mountain road on a windy day. They were also impressed by the number of estuaries; so we can expect to see estuarine birds as well as forests, ferns, landscapes and seascapes, and the odd fungus and orchid. As usual, the meeting will be at HIRL beginning at 7.30pm.



Our **March excursion on Saturday 22nd** will take us to the coast just over the border, around Port Macdonnell, to see unusual cliff and rock formations, coastal vegetation and birds. The drive from Hamilton takes two hours. We'll meet at the Hamilton Visitor Information Centre in Lonsdale Street at 8.30am, and to save fuel we suggest you come prepared to either take passengers or transfer into another car. Some people may decide to camp out and make it a weekend trip as there is a lot to explore in the area; we can discuss this further at the preceding meeting.

Also in March, on Tuesday 18th (not a weekend), we have been invited by Nature Glenelg Trust to help with restoration of **Bradys Swamp**. The aim is to block an artificial drain with sandbags, a method which has been successful at several other sites and has the advantage of being easily modified if necessary. Volunteers who can help fill sandbags will be especially appreciated but there will probably be opportunities for the less muscled as well. Rod Bird send out further details by email when available, so please contact him if you are not on our emailing list and would like to come.

APRIL SPIES

April will see our “spying on shy animals” excursion on **Saturday 19th, Easter Saturday**. If you have any Easter visitors you might like to bring them along. The Club has an ongoing project in the Bear Forest, south of Rocklands, where we have put up nest boxes for small arboreal mammals, and movement-sensitive cameras. So far we have captured images of several species of birds and mammals, including sugar gliders and a koala, and late last year a couple of the nest boxes contained sugar gliders. On this trip we will be checking the nest boxes and setting up the cameras again. We will start from the Visitor Centre at 9am. If you can't make this trip, we will be checking the cameras and nest-boxes again in June.

MAY – Across CANADA and up MT NAPIER

At our **Special Meeting** on **15 May** we shall be shown some **Wildlife, Flora and Landscapes of Canada**. The presenters will be Ruth and Ivor Graney, who recently spent a month travelling across Canada from Quebec westwards all the way to Vancouver Island. Expect to see some “stunningly beautiful” scenes and amazing amounts of water.

The excursion on the following **Saturday 17 May** will be to Mt Napier. This may include an ascent of the mountain for those with sufficient energy, but we will also be looking at the “Devil’s Hole”, a spectacular explosion crater on the edge of the Park, as well as a few small caves and other volcanic features. We will set off from the Visitor Centre at 9.30am.

WINTER

The **June** and **August excursions** will both be to mountains. In June we'll go to the Grampians for a walk in the Yarram Gap area, and in August to the Black Range. In **July**, we'll have another coastal excursion, this time to Cape Nelson. Last time we went there we saw an elephant seal, so who knows what we will find this time?

For our **July Special Meeting**, we shall be looking close to home with a presentation by Ben Church and Mary Johnson about the “**Yarns on Farms**” project, where current land-holders and indigenous people exchanged and compared their knowledge and interpretation of the land.

AND SPRING

Spring brings on the bees, including the “working bees”. This is when our native grasslands are in flower, but also the time when invasive weeds come up and need to be eliminated before they set seed. So we have several working bees scheduled, and in order to accommodate them and fit in with the best flowering times our September excursion has been moved to the first weekend in October. Please refer to the Program for the details, and if in doubt about any of the working bees contact Rod Bird.

Lastly, Two Things Not to Forget:

Memberships for 2014 are now due, unchanged at \$15 per person or \$20 for a family. Please fill in the enclosed form and send it to the Treasurer or bring it to the next meeting.

And don't forget the bird count on Lake Hamilton, the Thursday following every meeting, starting at 8am at the beach.