



HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

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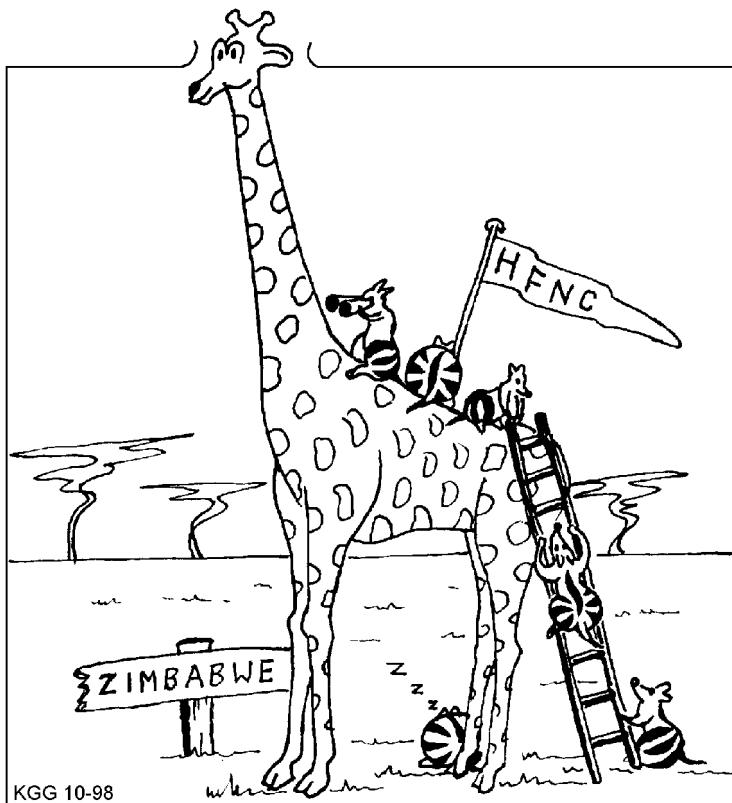
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Animals and Birds of the Southern Continents

At this month's Special Meeting on 19 November, Rob Drummond will give us "An Australian's view of birds and animals in Zimbabwe"

On the following Saturday, 21st, there will be an excursion to the Ralph Illidge Sanctuary, near Warrnambool, where we will be able to look at the creek and forest habitat of some of this continent's fauna, and no doubt see a good range of bird species. We will meet at the Tourist Information Centre in Hamilton at 8.30 am.

As for the animals and birds of South America, Diane Luhrs and Rod Bird have recently returned from Peru, so we can look forward to hearing about all the creatures (not to mention ancient Inca cities) they saw there at one of our meetings next year.



Pre-Christmas Get-Together

Last year's picnic at the Wannon Falls was so enjoyable (if a little difficult to locate) that this year we have decided to go to the Nigretta Falls. The date will be Thursday 3rd December, the time "6 for 6.30" - or whenever you can get there after work. We will have a barbecue, weather permitting, at one of the sites upstream from the Falls, beside the River; just follow the gravel track north from the circular road and you should find us.

We hope that people who haven't been able to make it to many of our meetings or excursions this year because of work pressures may still be able to come along to this event - where perhaps they will be inspired to make an early New Year's Resolution to set aside more time next year for pleasurable pursuits such as Field Nats' outings.

RECENT DOINGS

On the postponed June excursion at Mount Napier the weather was perfect and lured out a large contingent of expeditionary members. It was a rewarding walk, providing caves for people who

like crawling into holes, fungi for people who get excited by fruiting bodies, and interesting plants and rock formations for those with more normal tastes.

Elusive Parrots: At our July meeting, Bob Hawkes gave us a detailed and vivid description of his experiences of the orange-bellied parrot. By the end of the evening we all realised that our excursion to Discovery Bay to look for the birds was doomed to failure because we would be there at the wrong time of day. Sure enough, there was a noticeable dearth of orange-bellied parrots, but we have great plans for next year.

At the Wannon: In August a good turn-out of people planted 200 trees at the Wannon Falls Reserve: 50 each of blackwood, black wattle, drooping she-oak and manna gums. Many of the trees from our previous plantings are doing very well, though a number of the she-oaks have suffered from being browsed - possibly by both rabbits and kangaroos - and we put guards round as many of these as we could. There are also several self-sown black wattles growing "like weeds". We filled in gaps and worked further north and west, but there is still plenty of unplanted ground for next year. We also had a look at the "18-acre Reserve" (just north of the Glenelg Highway) where a track had recently been put in for rabbit baiting. Rod Bird and Dave Munro later met with the representative of Parks Victoria, who manage the Reserve, to discuss with him the problems of the track and the need for the vegetation to be burned to preserve its floristic value.

Arctic wastes and little deserts: In September, John Koutsiki talked about Alaska, showed some wonderful slides, and even handed out "goodies" from the Land of the Midnight Sun to all the audience. Those of us who went on the Camp-Out to the Little Desert were rewarded by the superb spring floral display for which this area is famous.

To quote our president: "The Saturday afternoon stroll along the Ridge Walk was particularly bountiful." (see Dave for details of plant species) "After a cold night and frosty morning we set off for the Stringybark Native Walk where we found an unusual 'weeping' Yellow Gum and troops of Heart-Lip Spider Orchids. We lunched on top of Mount Arapiles overlooking a sea of potential margarine (canola crops in full bloom) while Glenys and John regaled us with stories of rock-climbing. Later we walked round the base and witnessed a number of lithe-bodied young folk pit their skills against the sandstone and gravity."



Native grasslands: At our October meeting Yvonne Ingeme gave us an illustrated talk about our local native grasslands, and on the following Saturday she illustrated her talk even further by taking us to several sites where there were well-preserved communities of plants, many in glorious flower. (One of them, Macarthur cemetery, also had some well-preserved and fascinating headstones.) Sadly one of the sites, Forest Lane, also displayed, in the midst of a sea of golden moth orchids, a large ugly island of capeweed, phalaris and other nasties. This is the site where the road spoil was dumped and later removed. It remains to be seen whether this patch will persist or spread. We are at present putting together a submission to the Shire of Southern Grampians on the Final Draft of its Roadside Management Plan. It is certainly to be hoped that a Plan can be formulated, and followed, that will prevent such disasters from happening in the future.