



HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

NEWSLETTER March 1999

Committee for 1999

Don't throw away your list of the 1998 committee. At the AGM on February 18, all the members were re-elected to the same positions. (This is called recycling.) Just in case you have forgotten, they are: President Dave Munro; Vice-President John Cayley; Secretary Janeen Samuel; Treasurer Ken Grimes; Media Liaison Officer Yvonne Ingeme.

Also at the AGM it was agreed that membership subscriptions to the Club should stay the same as last year, at \$15 per person or \$20 for a family. If you can't make it to our next meeting or excursion (or even if you can), you can fill in the form at the end of this Newsletter and send the money to Ken Grimes at PO Box 591, Hamilton.

Program for 1999

The program of speakers and excursions for the rest of this year is attached. As prospective speakers are not always able to predict their movements, there could be some last minute adjustments, so please check the "Spectator" advertisements on the preceding Saturday for any changes. (Better still, make sure your membership is up-to-date and you will receive a Newsletter.)

You will note that we have included three "camp-outs". These are all at places within easy reach for a day's excursion, so people who don't like camping or can't spare a whole weekend can join us for a single day only.

Also note that the July excursion is a week later than expected, as it has to fall on the weekend programmed for the Orange-Bellied Parrot Count.

March events

Have you always longed to see ancient Inca cities and spotted jaguars but been too afraid of altitude sickness and yellow fever? Now's your chance - at our meeting on 18 March, when Rod Bird and Diane Luhrs tell us about their trip to Peru, "from the heights of the Andes to the depths of the jungle".

Our excursion on 21 March will venture over the border. Since our last visit to the Naracoorte Caves Park in 1994, there have been two exciting developments. The first is "Bat Television": the Bat Centre where, via infra-red telecameras set up in the Bat Cave, you can spy on what the bats are getting up to down in the dark. The second is the Wonambi Fossil Centre (opened in November 1998) where working reconstructions of the fossils found in the Caves allow you to glimpse



what this area was like when the megafauna was still around - being a Field Naturalist in those days must have been somewhat hazardous. There will be a cost for visiting these: probably between \$10 and \$14 per person. If we can be certain of a reasonable number of people, we can book ahead as a group, which means a slightly cheaper rate and our own guide. For this reason it would be helpful if we could have an indication of numbers beforehand. If you are fairly sure of coming, could you ring and tell Ken or Janeen on 5573 4503, by 11 March? (But if you haven't rung don't let that stop you from coming.) Included in the "package" will be a "self-guided" cave tour, so wear sensible shoes (no lights needed, no bending or crawling!) There will be other cave tours available for those who are interested; there is also a very nice cafe for those who don't wish to take their lunch.

It takes about 2 hours to drive to Naracoorte. We'll leave from the Tourist Office at 9.00am, but people living west of Hamilton might prefer to meet us at the Naracoorte Caves Park: meet at the entrance to the Wonambi Fossil Centre (where all the tours are booked) at 10.45am South Australian Time.

Events in April and May

Our April 15 general meeting will (DV) be a short one, and after it Reto and Yvonne will tell us about their last year's trip to the Kimberleys.

On April 17 the Friends of the Grampians have arranged for a workshop to be given by Hans Brunner at Hall's Gap on Hair Analysis - an interesting follow-up for those who were involved in the hair-tube trapping program. Obviously not everyone will want to participate, and places will be limited. However, if we all go to Hall's Gap some of us can go for walks in the area while others are learning to distinguish a rock wallaby whisker from a wisp of woolly jumper.

Note that our May meeting will be on Friday 21 and not on the Thursday, as Ross Cayley will be coming from Melbourne to tell us about his travels in Sabah, on the island of Borneo. This will be followed on Sunday 23 by a trip to Loch Ard Gorge, where Ken and Ross will be able to give us conflicting versions of the geology of the area. We will also be able to look at the heath vegetation, and perhaps see the first stages of the Visitor Centre.

Recent events

The committee (and other industrious members) kept themselves busy over the holiday period by preparing submissions: to Southern Grampians Shire Council on the draft Roadside Management Plan and on their plans for the Wannon and Nigretta Falls Reserves; and to a Commonwealth Senate Committee on the proposed Regional Forests Agreement Bill. If any of our members are interested in reading these submissions, please contact the secretary.

John and Glenys Cayley also found time for a trip to the North Island of New Zealand, and showed us slides after the AGM which made us all wish we'd been there too.

For our first excursion of the year, the annual bird count at Lake Linlithgow, we were joined by members of the Bird Observers' Club. The Lake was very low this year and there were some notable absences among the bird species. (See the attached table, supplied by Rod Bird).

Members will be sorry to hear that Elizabeth Arthur has suffered a nasty break to her arm, after a piece of Carmichael Street attacked her. We all wish her a speedy recovery and hope it won't prevent her coming to our March events.



KGG 2-1996