

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER

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Outside the tall sun fades the shabby mallee,
and drives the ants deep underground;
the stony drift-sand shrivels
the drab sparse plants;
there's not a cloud in all the sky to cast
a shadow on the tremulous plain.
Stirless the windmills, thirsty cattle standing
despondently about the empty tanks
stamping and tossing their heads
in torment of the flies from dawn to dark.
For ten parched days it has been like this
and, although I love the desert, I
have found myself,

dreaming
of upright gums by a mountain creek
where the red boronia blooms,
where bell-birds chime through the morning mists,
and greenness can hide from the sun;
of rock-holes where the brumbies slink
like swift cloud-shadows from the gidgi-scrub
to drink when the moon is low.

FLEXMORE HUDSON in
"IN THE WIND'S TEETH".

SNAKES (AND LADDERS).

or

A Few Notes About our Reptiles.

By David D. Stead.

You have read in these pages of strange things - Tigers, Orangutans, (although in the S.B.W. one usually hears "ARANG ATANG") rabbits, and many other wonderful animals, and now I propose to tell you some facts about our reptiles and the evolutionary stages (and ladders) by which they develop from the even simpler forms of life which preceded them in Geological history.

As many of you are doubtless aware, the earliest back boned or vertebrate animals were the fishes. Our present knowledge of the stages by which life has developed, is largely dependent on fossil remains which have been found. We know very little from such remains regarding the immediate ancestors of the first bony fishes. It is probable that they were swimming creatures which gradually developed hard portions around their mouths - the beginnings of teeth. The cartilaginous fishes, which still exist as sharks and stingrays, were, no doubt, one of the intermediate stages in the development of bony fishes from the soft boneless creatures which preceded them. Many of our stingrays have rough prickly plates covering the roof and floor of the mouth, and at the lips these give way to the flattened tooth-like scales which cover most of the body.

The next main point in the upward development of animal life, was an amphibian one related to the newts (which still exist in a number of forms) which had adapted themselves to living on land, but which, like the present day amphibians, needed to live in and near wet places. This lowest form of land vertebrate, although it had become adapted to breathing air, still returned to the water to reproduce its kind, possibly in a similar manner to that in which the frogs and other amphibians today lay their eggs in water.

The Age of the Amphibia was the Carboniferous Age or the Age of the Great Coal Swamps, when all life was centred in and around the swamps and lagoons. This exceedingly fertile period in the World's history was followed by what must have been a great succession of dry ages, which are represented in the rock formations to-day by great deposits of sandstones and similar rocks in which there are very few fossils of any kind. These overlying deposits commenced the processes of compressing and petrifying the masses of swamp vegetation which had apparently existed for such long periods, which form the great coal deposits of the present time.

During these long, hard ages of changed conditions, the great variety of amphibious life which had populated the Earth, under-went enormous changes to meet alterations in their environment.

The study of Geology indicates that following the long ages of temperature extremes, glacial cold, and the submersion of the Coal Swamps under the great layers of Sandstones, there was a reversion to moist warm conditions in which many new forms of animal and plant life were established. Fossil remains are found from this period of vertebrated animals that laid eggs which, instead of hatching into tadpole-like forms needing to live for a time in water,

developed within the egg to a stage at which they could live in air from the moment of hatching. The gill breathing mechanism had disappeared and the gill slits only appeared as a phase during the development of the embryo even as the human embryo passes through this stage to this day.

These new forms of life were the reptiles. A combination of favourable conditions resulted in a vast period in which warm conditions prevailed, during which innumerable reptilian forms ruled the Earth. It is considered by some Geologists that this, the Mesozoic Period or the Age of Reptiles (on account of the great diversity of form and superiority over all other types of animal life), may have lasted for some two hundred million years.

Some of the reptile forms which inhabited the Earth during the Mesozoic Period persist to this day, but most of them died out. There were the Dinosaurs of many types, some of them attaining a length of almost 100 feet. These were all herbivorous, but there were also great carnivorous reptiles, like the Tyrannosaurus which preyed upon its great vegetarian cousins. There were fish lizards and there were flying lizards, but before the so-called Age of Reptiles came to an end, most of these types had died out, or were giving way to other types of life which ultimately developed into the birds and mammals of more recent Geological times. The historian, the Geologist, and the Zoologist would probably writhe in agony at the impertinence of attempting to deal with the Age of Fishes, the Carboniferous Period and the Age of Reptiles in one page.

To-day, the distribution of reptiles over the Earth's surface is very limited and the number of types is small. The only forms left are the snakes, the turtles and tortoises, the crocodiles and alligators, and the lizards.

It is proposed to deal only with Australian reptiles, here, and next month, I hope to tell you some truths and explode some fallacies about snakes.

COOLAMINE

by Allan Wyborn.

Coolamine Plains country from the Bimberi Range is a fascinating pattern of open grasslands and heavily timbered ridges. From this western boundary of the Australian Capital Territory, the mighty Mount Jagungal provides a background for the plains, rising to 6,755 feet. Although the mount is forty miles to the south, we could clearly see a pink mantle of snow draping the shoulders of this "crouching lion".

Mount Bimberi, 6,267 feet, was the farthest we went along the Brindabella Range. Going down through Murray Gap we came to the Goodradigby River at a lovely spot where all was verdant and tranquil. The swift murmuring river cut its way across the valley floor in a twisting channel. We crossed and climbed up on to a plain covered in rich clover pasture, at one

end of which was a deserted homestead called "The Pockets", once the residence of Tom Taylor.

From here a well worn stock route led across the green flats of Cooleman Plain. At Seventeen Flat we tried to make friends with a group of splendid horses, which had been running free for a good while judging by their condition and timidity. The best we could do was a skyline photo from a distance of thirty feet.

Cave Creek runs through deep limestone gorges and is of such considerable size that residents of the district call it the Upper Goodradigby River, although it is really only a large branch. Here we explored the Blue Pool (similar in colour to that at Jenolan), and several of the caves. A forlorn prospector's hut stood as a reminder that several gold mines were once worked here. We found later that this part is a recreational reserve, and that the main caves are further upstream.

Topping a ridge about a mile further on, we saw several cottages and a cluster of sheds situated at the nearer end of a delightful open plain, with the silvery thread of a creek winding its way across it. So this was Coolamine Plains! a truly delightful spot. Expecting to find quite a number of people we were surprised that only two lived there. They were Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bridle, who were managing this sheep station of 2500 acres, carrying 2,700 sheep. It is a freehold property surrounded by snow leases, from which all stock are removed by the end of March, before the winter sets in. We learned that sometimes snow lies feet deep on this 4,300 feet high plain for five months of the year. During this time connection is made with the outside world on skis, or as they call them, snowshoes. Horses often bog up in deep snowdrifts.

The Bridles proved to be a very hospitable couple. Evidently they had never come upon walkers before, or rather walkers had never visited them, and as evening was drawing near, we were easily prevailed upon to stop for the night. They obligingly saddled up horses for us, as Alice was longing to get into the saddle again after many years away from horseriding.

After a satisfying dinner we were joined by one, Billy Jemmett, an old timer who had ridden over from Rules Point to help drive some sheep. He was a great yarnspinner, and a very pleasant evening was spent listening to his reminiscences, some of which are worth repeating.

Billy was a Boer War veteran of stocky build, with a large moustache and clad in flannel shirt, corduroy breeches and leather leggings. Many were his experiences. He was an animal lover, and it was his conviction that animals had their own language with which they were able to transmit any variety of thoughts. Take his horses; one of them had only to see him coming across the paddock with the saddles and would canter over to the other. "He's coming to get us, let's make a break for it down the creek!" On one occasion while driving sheep, he noticed a dog disappear for a while; coming back guiltily the dog barked to the other dogs and at the first opportunity they went off in a bunch to where Billy later found the remains of a sheep they had killed. Then the white cockatoos post a sentry high in a tree to watch over their kind feeding on the ground below. At the first sign of an intruder a special warning tells the others to get aloft quickly, as someone unknown is approaching. Tame pets often show great understanding. Once Billy was confined to bed for days; living alone and being weak he became very hungry. Probably his cat realised this for it brought in a nice big rat and helpfully deposited it

Billy's chest.

We were so beguiled in front of the huge open fire by many tales, that it was well past midnight before we retired to a cosy bedroom with a large four poster bed and heavy wallabyskin quilt. Such luxuries for bushwalkers!

Next morning we said farewell to our three friends, my rucksac bulging with extra food in the shape of a billy full of fresh eggs, home made bread and biscuits. So we left Coelamine Plains with pleasant memories of our stay.

THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS ELIZABETH FULL STOP

It is Yuletide again and the Beautiful Princess comma Elizabeth comma who has been banished from the land is very happy because she has the most beautiful cake in the whole land.

Stay, gentle reader, while I tell you how the Beautiful Princess comma Elizabeth comma came to have the most beautiful cake in the whole land. I will tell you her story.

"Once upon a time there was an extremely beautiful young maiden named Elizabeth who was really a princess in disguise. Nobody knew she was a Princess, not even her father or her mother. Only Elizabeth knew she was a Princess, but she was bound by an oath to the Leprechauns never to tell anyone. She knew that she was so very beautiful that a wicked ogre would seize her and take her off to his lair if it were known that she was a princess as well as being so very, very beautiful, so she never told anyone. Now children, in the land where the Beautiful Princess comma Elizabeth comma lived were two Fairy Godmothers who didn't have a Godchild. Now these two Fairy Godmothers saw the beautiful maiden Elizabeth and they said one to another "Now there is a maiden who is worthy of our affection - one who is pure and noble as well as beautiful. Let us have her for our Fairy Godchild." So that is how the Princess Elizabeth (who was the only one who knew she was a Princess) became the Dairy Godchild of the two Fairy Godmothers. Now the two Fairy Godmothers were named Hilda M. and Annie K. the full names being Hilda Magnificence and Annie Kweenly (that is the way it is spelt in the land where they lived, Most other places spell it Queenly but here it is with a "kw"). These two Fairy Godmothers watched over the beautiful Princess comma Elizabeth comma and kept her in the straight and narrow way. At times the Princess thought it was very dull, but she knew her Fairy Godmothers knew what was best for her.

When the Princess was growing up her father (who was not the King) fell upon hard times and the poor little princess was sent to work for a dreadful ogre called the Public Service. There she was forced to work with horrid men who wore shiny navy blue suits and with horrid women who were silly, and the Princess after a time became quite desolate and melancholy. After a long, long time when she had almost become resigned to her fate she was released from the dreadful ogre's employ and sent to work for other people. There she toiled daily and was more or less happy until a dreadful plague occurred throughout the whole land. The head man in a neighbouring country decided that the King of the land where the Beautiful Princess lived had too much wealth and too much land, and he decided to make war on the King of the land where our Beautiful Princess lived. The King called up his henchmen and they all got upon their tanks and in their aeroplanes (they used those instead of fiery

the King in that land) and away they went to war. The King saw that his enemies would be very strong, so he sent a message to all the women of his land asking them to help. He did not want them to charge into battle on a tank or in an aeroplane, but he asked them to be very good and do whatever they could to help. The king called it "doing their bit". The King sent a special messenger to the Princess Elizabeth because he knew she would be such a very good worker and said "My name is George, I want you to go out and strike a blow for me against mine enemies." The beautiful princess was very pleased that she should receive such condescension from the King and immediately girded up her loins and went forth to "strike a blow for George." She put away all her feminine toys and was given three dresses, one blue to wear in the winter when it was cold, and two drab to wear in the summer when it was hot. She thought it would be better to wear those terrible clothes as no one would recognise her as a servant of the King and thus know she was striking a blow for George. The Princess, being as clever as she was beautiful, was sent on a very special and secret work and was sent all over the countryside striking blows (in a very secret way) against the King's enemies. She was sent to one spot where it was so wonderful that she gradually forgot she was supposed to be working against the King's enemies and began to think that it was her right and just due to have such joyousness. Her two Fairy Godmothers saw what was happening and shook their heads about their Fairy Godchild, but never once did they forsake her. They watched over her all the time, were happy in her happiness and consoled her in her few moments of madness.

When the King heard that the princess was forgetting to strike blows for him and was having too much pleasure, he became exceedingly angry and said to her (in a special message) "You are supposed to be striking blows for me and helping me to resist mine enemies, instead of which you are always seeking pleasure and have forgotten I am at war with a neighbouring giant. I had intended promoting you to a position of high authority but now you will have to wait until you learn to be a better hand-maiden." And with that he banished her from the pleasant land where she had been dwelling for so long and sent her to work in a dreadful city where she had to work in a horrid dungeon without any air and she had to live on a tiny little verandah with lots of other maidens who were unwanted and unloved and she was exceedingly sad and melancholy, but her two Fairy Godmothers were still watching over her and they said "Poor Fairy Godchild, she is very cast-down, and sad, but it will do her good as she must never forget to strike blows for the King. Let us show her that she is not forsaken and let us send her a beautiful cake to cheer her up." So the Fairy Godmother, Annie Kweenly, with advice from the Fairy Godmother, Hilda Magnificence, made a beautiful cake, which turned out to be the most beautiful cake in the whole land and sent it to their Fairy Godchild, the beautiful Princess comma Elizabeth full stop. And that dear children is the story of the beautiful Princess comma Elizabeth comma and how she came to have the most beautiful cake in the whole land and the two very best Fairy Godmothers.

WOULD THE CORRESPONDENT WHO WROTE REQUESTING AN OLD
COPY OF THE BUSHWALKER ANNUAL, PLEASE COMMUNICATE WITH
THE EDITOR, SYDNEY BUSHWALKER.

LETTERS FROM THE LADS AND LASSES

Letters were received from:-

Doris Allden	Keith Bannell
Max Nathan	Olive Moriarty
Bill Burke	Geoff Higson.
Gordon Mannell	

BILL BURKE 21.10.44 Ever so pleased to receive your letter although you probably don't think so by the time I've taken to answer it. No excuse, just too busy-lazy. Have just about achieved perfection in the art, so much so in fact that I'm seriously considering slinging the job in. A good thing it all right but one can get too much of it.

Picked up the pen a couple of times to write this but got sidetracked. Last time it was to help a couple of pals with a few of ale. In difficulties the poor lads and you know my soft hearted nature, just couldn't refuse when they called on me for assistance. Probably that's why I'm feeling so well at the moment almost inclined to tell you some wicked yarns but no, my reputation must remain untarnished. Do you know Dunc. but I've hardly heard one decent dirty yarn for weeks. I do declare that the lads are becoming most puritanical.

The past month has seen the rise and fall of W.H.Burke Pte., Due to the Sgt. being unavoidably required elsewhere I was called upon to keep the business running. And a most commendable job I made of it even if I do say it myself. Was quite a change to have to us the headpiece after being one of the sheep for so long. However, between business and my social responsibilities I was compelled to forsake my customary two hour daily sunbake (do I hear a sympathetic sigh as you read this?) Never mind, we Burkes were ever ones to suffer for the common good. Previously mentioned social responsibilities were rather onerous; apart from talking one of the local lassies into building me a chocolate sponge cake (um,um,um, even now my mouth waters when I think of it) I had to assist my "chinas" in disposing of a bottle of ale whenever they called upon me, plus arranging for several parties, the most notable of which was naturally in honour of my birthday of which more anon. Alas it is all over now and I'm a mere employee once more.

I think I warned you in my last letter that various nebulous thoughts were in the brain box regarding a party. Well they materialised. Half a dozen of the right people received the call. You know how these things are broadcast, stroll up to a man in the tent or on the mess parade and with one hand over the mouth, a quick side whisper "shes right, seven" the alarm is given. One must be most careful otherwise the "Pathfinder" and such like will invariably sniff the breeze and follow their noses until they "accidentally" stumble on the set up. One just can't be too careful in these army camps. The night went off O.K., that is apart from the bugler blowing reveille at midnight - to save the boys getting up in the morning, at least that's what he told us. Next morning however was another story, one didn't rise from the cot and it was only by a tremendous effort of will that I was able to arise and stagger into town for further supplies. Naturally I was blamed for everything. (Note:- Next paragraph censored WED) Gin was our downfall I presume you know a little about the wicked stuff. Due to the exigencies of the service and the prevailing drought it had to fill in the gap between the last of the "good stuff" and oblivion. It performed its duty nobly.

Dudley is out on the parade ground at the moment endeavouring to teach a dog some ground drill "Saint" - section leader - told him not to encourage mongrels round the camp. "Might be one" is the reply, "but at that he's got twice as much pedigree as you". Soraso is still in hospital, trust him to make a good thing of it, an abscess formed round a piece of crap still in his leg from the desert. Oh! but they are hopeless this platoon of mine, there's more fun in one day with them than a dozen elsewhere. As the O.C. said when informed by a "friend" of the platoon - he wanted one of our corporals for his own and couldn't get him - that twelve was only a rabble, "a little ragged perhaps, but the material is there". Just had some metal "heat" tickets handed to me in case if get hit by----- Pleasant though, pleasant weapon. Had a demonstration the other day. A man would squeal long and loud if he stepped in front of one of them. Keep the fingers crossed and hope Tojo has nonewaiting for us next trip.

I'm in disgrace at the moment - am the proud possessor of a pair of pyjama trousers. The only ones in the platoon and so I've had to maintain a strict watch or they will end up on the nearest available fire. We have our conventions here too you know and one just can't flout them without paying the penalty.

My transfer to the paratroops has been scrubbed - can't do without me in the Division. Quite a lot of releases have come through and I see Forde has promised us bigger, brighter and better times. Dudley's description of "Saint" would suit that man admirably and I've run out of news so its toodle-oo till next time, Bill.

MAX NATHAN - NORTHERN TERRITORY 17.10.44 The delay in writing my appreciation for magazines the Committee has sent me is due to one factor. I did want to include an article on the North, but my efforts did not express what I wanted to say and then I find that so much has been written in such magazines as Walkabout that I feel there is little else to say.

Of bushwalking there is very little I write because while the countryside is bushland and beautiful, it is flat and poorly watered and in my opinion too hot. Hitch-hiking is the best way of getting round, at least for those of us who have not a car at our disposal and 140 miles on Sunday is no effort.

It is more or less a code to pick up anybody "on the road" although its against orders, and anybody who doesn't is a lousy-er-, well anyway he's lousy. Food is no problem, prime Australian beef wrapped in tin is always available at the kitchen or canteen along with ironbound fruit and concentrated cow. Free meals are obtainable at any camp.

The only way to "do" this country is by car, then one can visit jungles, swamps with wild fowl, extensive billabongs, springs and rivers.

However all I set out to do in this note was to ease my conscience by saying "thanks" to the Services Committee. I hope to be home soon and thereby end what has become a bludge on Public Money.

OLIVER MORIARTY - MELBOURNE 23.10.44 Would you please note my change of address. I continue to receive the Bulletin and appreciate it very much. I have just returned from six months spent in America and the Pacific and expect soon to be en-tour again. With every good wish to the Club, Marrie.

BACKYARD BUSHWALKING

It is marvellous how one thing leads to another. Our friend the apiarist (fan mail again!) kindly brought round an object lesson on what an excess of pollen means to a beekeeper. It was a frame which is thoughtfully put into the hive by the beekeeper for the bees to build the comb in. Instead of the comb being full of that delectable quintessence of nectar which we prosaically call honey, it was full of pollen (mixed into a cement like mixture with honey). As a work of art it was a masterpiece. It resembled a miniature tessellated pavement of glorious tints of yellows and browns. But alas to the jaundiced eye of my friend it only represented so much wasted honey and bee-hours of fruitless labour.

Returning to the bush garden however, the last few weeks have been one of constant anxiety for the tender seedlings. The land has a fairly steep slope to the NW and consequently it gets the full force of the afternoon sun. A few waratahs succumbed to the heat and blistering westerlies but the three survivors are doing well and growing steadily. The flannel flowers seem to like the heat (but are grateful for an occasional extra-pluvial drink) and the seedlings are now a couple of inches high.

New seedlings which are doing well are Christmas bush, broadleaved baka, and species of casuarina not yet identified which is not represented in our bit of bush. A cymbidium (orchid) which was planted in a rockery has sent out a spray of dainty blooms and from nowhere at all (apparently) a ground orchid made its appearance. It was a handsome little fellow about seven inches high with several flowers. The striking part of the flower was the labellum which was covered with purplish hairs. Hurried reference to "Orchids of N.S.W." extracted the information that its family name is "Calochilus" (Beardies to common folk - on account of its whiskers.)

Tragedy overcame the romance of the wrens. After building a marvellous little home, roof and all with entrance through an attic window, eggs were laid, youngsters hatched, and then alas! A neighbour's cat decided his meal was ready. By way of compensation however, we have discovered another nest safe out of harm's way on the branch of a peach tree. In it are three tiny blue eggs. Here's hoping.

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Paddy takes this opportunity of wishing all walkers a happy Christmas and a good New Year.

'Phone B3101.

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SYDNEY.

Camp Gear for Walkers.