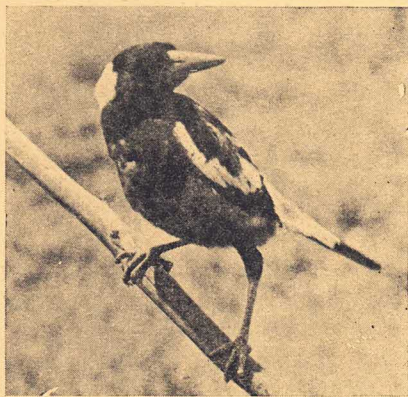


AUSTRALIAN WILD LIFE

JOURNAL OF THE
Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia



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January, 1937.

Twenty-Sixth Annual Report

*Presented to the Annual Meeting of the Society held at Sydney,
26th November, 1936*

The following report covers the period from 1st July, 1935, to the present date, but the accounts to be presented cover the twelve months from July, 1935 to June, 1936, inclusive.

This report deals with a period of unusual activity in many departments of the Society's work. While it is not practicable to cover the whole scope of this work within the confines of the report, the various matters dealt with here will at least indicate to members and our friends something of the great variety and importance of our public duties, in the protection of our fauna and flora and the conservation of what we have termed, in past reports "the soul of Australia." In this connection, it is not too much to claim that during the twenty-seven years of existence of this Society it has been a major influence among the Australian people in this general preservation work, and, while educating and bringing understanding to the people at large, it has been instrumental in bringing conservation laws into being, has assisted the authorities in the administration of such and has, either as a body or through its individual members, been the medium for the setting aside of vast sanctuary areas in many parts of Australia. The results of such work are not always immediately apparent, even to our own members, but, as time passes, there is increasing evidence of the value of this work, both in actual conservation results and in the attitude of the public to such questions.

As we have pointed out in former reports, a very great deal of our work is of a recurrent nature; particularly such as aims at the protection of individual species of our fauna, or the preservation of wild flowers and other flora; but each year brings also many important matters relating to general conservation, dedication of sanctuary areas, etc., before us, and the period under review has been especially fertile in this way. Public interest in these questions is always very great, and we have much evidence that it is regularly increasing; yet, unfortunately, a very small percentage of the people can rapidly undo the accumulated results of conservation work. The untrammelled shooter still roams the countryside, vast bushfires—largely the result of carelessness or thoughtlessness of a comparative few—still ravage the bushlands, destroying fauna and flora, ravaging vast forests, scrub and grass lands, endangering and even destroying



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The Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia was formed in 1909 to encourage the protection of, and to cultivate interest in the Australian flora and fauna. The Society needs the help and interest of every citizen of Australia.
Members are requested to forward Subscriptions or Donations addressed to the Society, Science House, Sydney, or to any member of Council.
Applications for membership may be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Science House, Sydney, or to any member of the Council.
Annual Subscription: Women, £2/12/6; Men, £5/5/-.
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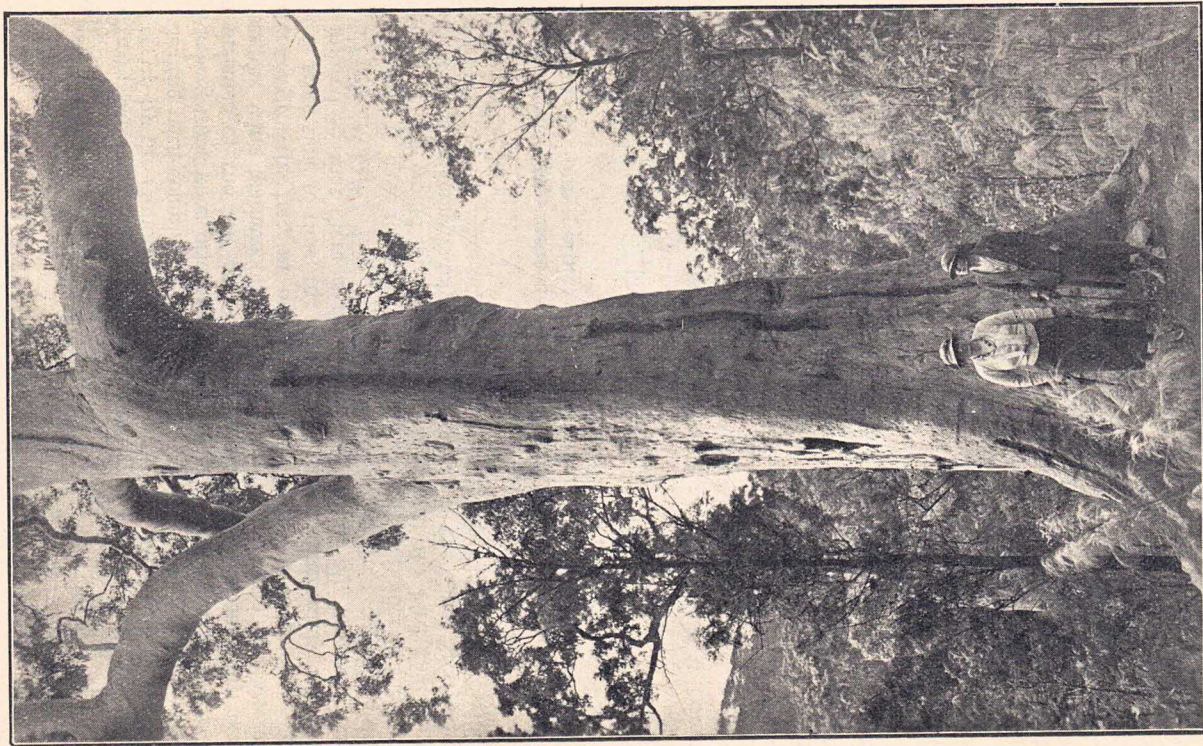
human life, destroying property and stock, and contributing on a large scale to that erosion of the land which has become one of the major national problems of Australia. This problem of the bushfire is dealt with specially in the same issue of our Journal, *Australian Wild Life*, in which this Annual Report appears. We commend it to the notice of our members and friends, and particularly to the city and country newspapers of the various States—to the number of several hundreds—who have helped us so much in past years in spreading an intelligent and loving interest in our wild life.

1. SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT RE AVALON BIG TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

In our last Annual Report (page 15 of *Australian Wild Life*, 1935) we referred to the gigantic specimen of the Sydney Red Gum, or Smoothbark Apple, *Angophora lanceolata*, situated upon a beautiful piece of land at Avalon, a few miles north of Manly, N.S.W., and expressed the hope that a way would be found of acquiring the land, so that the tree might be preserved as a National Monument thereon. After much negotiation, extending from June, 1935, until November of the present year, it was decided by the Society—at a Special Meeting convened for that purpose on November 24—to purchase a suitable area of the land possessing the tree mentioned, and certain other features of floral and geological interest. In many ways this is the biggest step ever taken by the Society. Financially, of course, it is far and away our greatest adventure. Details of this wonderful acquisition will be given full publicity later, when all arrangements for its preservation and control have been completed.

In the meantime we publish here a photograph of the trunk of this arboreal marvel, shown in its bush setting. Though apparently growing commonly to a very great age in the hungry environment of the "Hawkesbury Sandstone" country, the Sydney Red Gum does not usually attain to a very large size. Those who are familiar with the species, therefore, will, while admiring the beauty of this particular giant, find some amazement that it has been able to attain to such a stature in this location—even though it may have taken several hundreds of years in doing so.

When we are able to publish full details regarding this new possession of ours we are confident that we will have the fullest approbation from members and friends. *In advance of a general appeal for funds to cover our outlay, may we invite tree lovers to send along—apart from ordinary membership contributions—their special subscriptions to help to reimburse the Society, and to keep us "in funds" so as to enable our important work to proceed without interruption.* We have many plans for pushing ahead our work throughout Australia, but our outlook must be limited by our visible funds.



GIANT SYDNEY RED GUM, *Angophora lanceolata*.

Preserved as a National Monument by the Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia, at the new bushland sanctuary at Avalon, near Manly, New South Wales.

2. GENERAL PRESERVATION

(a) *Captive Magpies and Kookaburras*.—Once again we are obliged to mention the cruel custom of keeping in backyards and gardens, captive Magpies and Kookaburras. Much time has been taken up by the Honorary Secretary during the period under review in dealing with complaints by bird lovers and by neighbours of those possessing these poor prisoners, who keep the birds—usually singly—in defiance of the law and of all humane considerations. In most cases the wing feathers only are cut, and the bird can be liberated after re-growth; but, in many instances which have come under notice from time to time, the last joint has been deliberately removed or injured so that there is no hope for flight at all, however long such birds are kept. In a number of those occurrences coming under our notice, we have rested upon the promise by the holder of the bird that he or she would let the wing grow so that the bird might fly. In most cases we immediately report the matter to the Chief Secretary's Department, which takes action; sometimes by warning and occasionally by prosecution.

May we again issue a strong appeal to the kindness and consideration of our people to do everything possible to stop this practice.

(b) *Natural Re-establishment of Koala*.—In recent months we have received some gratifying evidence of natural re-establishment of the Koala in several places in the coastal districts of New South Wales. One grave difficulty that has constantly to be faced is that some of our people, the moment it is known that there are wild Koalas available, endeavour to catch them to keep as pets; with disastrous results to the animals. Apart altogether from our main scheme of having a large area of suitable bush country set aside for assisted re-establishment of the species on a large scale, we are satisfied from the evidence of the past few years, that, if everyone will help in the protection of the Koala, wherever found, we can, in the course of a few years, bring about a fairly strong establishment of it, in at least some of its old haunts. On one island in a coastal lake, where the animals were introduced some time back, they have increased beyond the food capabilities of the area. One colony of Koalas was reported recently within a few miles of Sydney. We had known of this confidentially for more than a year past, but had endeavoured to keep the matter quiet, in view of the tendency to public interference already referred to.

We are sure that not only our members, but the general public, will agree with us that *the Government itself should directly busy itself with this question of the re-establishment of the Koala*. Shortly put, our scheme which we have repeatedly put forward for years past, is that a large section of rough country, difficult of public access, should be made available for the Koala. One or two resident ranger-caretakers would be necessary, both to preserve the area from

spoliation by wandering shooters and to keep down vermin—such as dogs and dingoes. Such caretakers also would keep necessary firebreaks in order to prevent the encroachment of forest fires, which are one of the principal of the great enemies to the spread of the Koala.

The cost of such a scheme would not be at all large—though even a considerable expenditure would be justified in efforts to retain for our people, and for posterity, one of Nature's most charming and most striking faunal examples—not merely in Australia but in the whole world.

In this connection we should again reiterate our strong reminder to the Australian people, that no exhibitions of the Koala, whether in Zoological Gardens or elsewhere—however these may be justified in special cases by some—can even begin to bring about this necessary re-establishment, which it has been one of our main objectives to achieve, ever since our foundation meeting, in 1909. We hear a very great deal about such exhibitions being "great tourist attractions" and that "they help to sell Australia" to overseas people, but surely the knowledge that we were preserving our strange animal life, successfully, in a state of Nature, would go much further in advertising us—for all the world talks of Australia's animals. We must repeat America's wonderful object lesson in resuscitating the nearly extinct American Bison, and the internationally successfully re-creating of the seal herds in the Pribilof Islands—both far more difficult problems than our Koala presents.

(c) *Invasion of Sanctuaries by Gunners*.—Although this may be given a very wide application, in view of complaints from many quarters, we specially desire to refer to the extremely unsatisfactory conditions which have obtained for so long in the Burragarang Valley. This magnificent national asset, with its grand scenery and its many natural features of such outstanding interest to naturalist, botanist, and geologist alike—was declared a sanctuary for wild life some years ago at the instance of this Society. As the years have passed, it has become increasingly a Mecca for holiday makers. Though many of these are transients in motor cars, large numbers of people are accommodated during the summer time in the various boarding houses which have sprung up here and there; while, in addition, during the Christmas-New Year period and at Easter time, hundreds are to be found under canvas. This great influx of people, largely of a thoughtless age, has already caused grave injury to this sanctuary, through destruction of flora and fauna and by the frequent spreading of bushfires. Our greatest difficulty, however, has been caused by the constant flagrant violation of this sanctuary by persons armed with pea-rifles, winchesters and shotguns. Not only has this been done almost without let or hindrance by the authorities, but it has been openly encouraged by many of the resident boarding-house keepers.

Government and other tourist bureaux also have assisted—whether intentionally or not is beside the point here—by the free and wide circulation of notices and advertisements in which would be patrons of the various boarding houses or car services were told of “good shooting,” “game,” “splendid sport with the gun,” and what not. This is by no means a new trouble. In our past reports we have referred to folders or advertisements issued by the Government Tourist Bureau, or under its auspices, in which people were openly invited to destroy protected birds. Paradoxically enough, the Tourist Bureau is associated with the Chief Secretary's Department, and the Chief Secretary is the Minister charged with the administration of the Birds and Animals Protection Act! Surely we do not speak harshly, or without reason, when we say that this, at least, indicates a great lack of oversight on the part of the Department of State principally interested.

Even in our last Annual Report we drew attention to the Society's concern at discovering that the Tourist Bureau was distributing folders, which, *inter alia*, suggested the shooting of the quaint Scrub Turkey (or Tallegalla) at Barrington Tops. Not only was the bird protected, but the area itself is a sanctuary! Tourists were told that the birds were plentiful and were “delicious table birds.” After our exposure and representations in the matter, the offending publication was withdrawn.

Reverting to Burratorang: Following upon a number of complaints as to the use of firearms there, we communicated with the Chief Secretary's Department. Almost simultaneously a strongly sustained newspaper correspondence began, in the course of which many complaints were made of the same nature. In the meantime the Council discovered the folders advertising accommodations in the Valley. The first copy was handed to us by a returned tourist who stated that guns were very common in the area. We were also informed that at the last Christmas season there were upwards of a thousand people in the Valley, many possessing guns. Many complaints were also made as to the destruction of wild flowers and other flora, and this matter was taken up in consultation with the Local Government Department.

Our first complaint to the Chief Secretary about the advertisements complained of, was on December 8 of last year. We were promised preventive action; yet, notwithstanding that in the meantime the whole thing had been thrashed out in the daily press, and that there could be no doubt in interested people's minds as regards the nature of this sanctuary, we had again to write to the Department, four months later, forwarding another folder, publicly circulated by the tourist agents, in which it was stated several times that there was “plenty of shooting,” “plentiful game” for the “rifle,” and so on. It should be mentioned here that we wrote officially to a number of these advertisers, telling them of the law and inviting their aid in preserving the fauna and flora and in maintaining this wonder-

ful sanctuary intact. Though the latter was worded very courteously, and in no provocative strain, not one of the recipients replied—an entirely unusual thing in our experience of dealing with the public in such matters. From this it looks as though the law can only be maintained there by a watchful Government authority.

The carrying of a gun into a sanctuary may be taken, under the Birds and Animals Protection Act, as *prima facie* evidence of an intention to kill protected fauna; yet we read in the “society column” of the Sydney Morning Herald that Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So had closed their flat in Sydney and “with gun, torches and riding kits” had gone down to Burratorang. We submitted this to the Chief Secretary, and, after enquiry by the police, were informed that “no evidence could be found that any illegal shooting had taken place.” Council members were very perturbed at the official acceptance of the actual invasion of the sanctuary by these and other people armed with firearms, and the Chief Secretary was informed accordingly.

The whole thing is in a very unsatisfactory position, unfortunately this Burratorang invasion is not the only one to occupy our attention during the period under review. Space here will not permit us to dwell in detail upon others, but it is clear that we shall have to keep on fighting for a tightening up of the law, while endeavouring to enlist the good offices of tourists and residents of these areas alike. Surely those who deal in accommodation for the holiday makers must see that it is in their own material interest to preserve such sanctuaries for the future. But whether they do or not, we are sufficiently in touch with the public heart and conscience to be able to say that it is the people's fervent wish that they shall be kept sacrosanct.

Tourist Bureau and Boarding House Advertisements.—We feel that the position is so very serious in regard to the issuing of advertisements by Government and other tourist agencies, and by various boarding house proprietors resident in tourist districts, that we must bring the matter to the special attention of our members and the general public again, before passing on to the next item. History shows that this is an ever-recurrent trouble, and that, however often we may draw official attention to it, we unfortunately have no guarantee that official oversight will be maintained in preventing it. In our Annual Report for the year 1924—following on several still earlier references—we drew Government's attention to the amazing action of the New South Wales Government Tourist Bureau in issuing literature advertising “Good shooting” in places that were proclaimed sanctuaries, and actually inviting the public to visit Lake Illawarra and shoot Wild Swan and other protected birds! The matter had been brought under the personal notice of the Director of the Bureau, who had given us an assurance that the objectionable matter would be eliminated from the Bureau's publications.

In October, 1925, the Director of the Bureau asked, through the Chief Secretary's Department, that our report should not be

further distributed, as the matters complained of had been attended to. In the Department's letter were the following important statements, which at least indicate that the Minister's desires in the matter are in accord with our own:—

"As you are aware, immediate action was taken by the Department to remedy the matter when the fact was observed that 'good shooting' was advertised. . . . However, the whole State is regarded as a sanctuary as far as the Government Tourist Bureau is concerned, and no information concerning shooting is distributed."

A similar statement was handed to the press by Minister Oakes, then Chief Secretary.

In the meantime, your Honorary Secretary had obtained current editions of the most important Tourist Guides issued by the Bureau, and found that, notwithstanding the Director's disclaimers, and the Minister's desires in the matter, no action had been taken to remedy the trouble. Consequently (in December) your President replied to the Department's letter, pointing out (1) that in a pamphlet called "The South Coast District of New South Wales" there were references to the shooting of (a) wild duck, swan and quail, and (b) swan, duck and pigeon; (2) that in another pamphlet there were references to shooting on many pages—no less than 19 instances being furnished. It was further pointed out that, in addition to all such cases there was much mention in tourist publications of "good sport" (used separately from fishing announcements)—an open encouragement to the promiscuous shooter.

In the departmental reply regret was again expressed, and it was stated that the Director would exercise the "utmost care to carry out the promise to the fullest extent" so that the Bureau should avoid "any further adverse criticism."

Yet, notwithstanding all these protestations on the part of the Bureau, and the good intentions of the Minister, a survey of the pages of a 300-page tourist book issued for 1925-6 showed again, several references to "shooting" and "good shooting."

Under the circumstances, can it be wondered at that news items like the following appear in the daily press:—

"Although Lake Illawarra has been proclaimed a sanctuary for birds, the wholesale slaughter of bird life continues there."—S.M.H.

(d) *Burrinjuck Sanctuary Invaded by Shooting Party*.—An almost equally upsetting discovery made by us during November last, was that a large party of gunners had been, not only allowed, but officially encouraged, to visit the Burrinjuck Reservoir—which we have fondly believed was kept inviolate for water fowl—for the purpose of destroying Cormorants. We were informed later, following our representations to the Chief Secretary's Department, that the "Cormorants were found to be very wild and it was a difficult

matter to get within shooting range." But this was not our main concern in the present instance, whatever views we or our individual members might hold on the much-debated question of Cormorants, their habits and effect. What did deeply concern us, when we elicited the full facts, was that the shoot was deliberately planned by an anglers' association in conjunction with the local police, and was carried out, as we were informed by the Chief Secretary's Department, "under police supervision." The Police reported that "there was no serious disturbance of other water fowl." We could not accept such a statement as this, of course, however honestly it was made, as it flies into the face of all our past experience in such matters, and we informed the Department accordingly. The question of the destruction of the Cormorants does not come up at this moment, but we shall discuss it at a later period. We did point out to the Minister, however, that a surer method of destroying Cormorants if unbiased investigation had shown the necessity for such, would have been to visit their rookeries at nesting time to destroy the eggs, but we did not recommend this, of course, as we believe, as we stated to the Minister, that it would seem proper that the Cormorants should be let alone in such a great sheet of deep water, where but little harm could come to the fisheries, rather than disturb the sanctuary at all.

Before leaving this matter it is our duty to add that the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission stated at the outset, following our enquiries, that no approval had been given by the Commission for the invasion by gunners. We were referred therefore to the Chief Secretary. Members of this Society and the major portion of the general public, we think, will agree with us that this occurrence is just as unsatisfactory as are those surrounding the Burrinjuck trouble.

(e) *Sanctuaries for "Unprotected" Birds*.—Bound up with the question of sanctuary invasion in each State of Australia, is the matter of giving some measure of protection to native birds and animals which ordinarily are not protected. It is not implied by this Council, nor has it ever been suggested, that birds and animals which are proved pests, should be preserved in every sanctuary area. Some sanctuaries cover—at least on paper—quite large tracts of our country; and it might be unreasonable to ask the settler surrounded by such a sanctuary to assist in the preservation of some noxious bird or animal. But there are sanctuary areas in well isolated country, of little value, if any, to settlement; and this Council feels, and has expressed the view strongly during the past year, that in some such place, all indigenous birds and animals should find refuge. There is nothing startling or new in this view. It is an accepted principle in every other country—and so we find Eagle and Hawk sanctuaries, sanctuaries for Lions, Panthers, Bears, Carnivores of all sorts, in an effort to preserve for all time at least some remnant of the whole range of animated Nature.

(f) *Vast Destruction of Possums in Queensland.*—In view of the immediate and special importance of the permanent preservation of the Possum, Council has authorised the Honorary Secretary to prepare a special full statement on the matter for inclusion in the same issue of our Journal as this Report, but we should make at least a short reference to it here. We are obliged to return to this question, as our past Annual Reports and other records show, almost continuously. In New South Wales and Victoria in recent years a gratifying attempt has been made by the authorities to conserve the species, notwithstanding the evidence of much illicit traffic which comes up every now and then. But in Queensland, unfortunately, we find a different story, and there the vast destruction which had been halted temporarily—at least as far as official permission was concerned—was again hastened during the present year, when millions of skins were marketed and sent out of the country. As usual there was much evidence that the short open season declared was merely an attempt to whitewash the illicit skin-dealing methods, which, as of old, had gone on unceasingly from the period of the last open season. Only in the previous year, as recorded in our last Report, the Queensland Government had stressed the urgent need for conservation of the Possums; yet, as we have ever found, the price of fur skins abroad, plus an accumulated stock of skins, seemed to justify a different point of view only these few months later! May we commend the full report on "The Tragedy of the Possum," in this issue, to all members and friends, as well as to the notice of the press throughout Australia. It has now become a matter of national concern. In the meantime we are being aided by a powerful committee—the University of London Animal Welfare Society (ULAWS)—in London, in an attempt to prevent the importation of such skins into England.

(g) *Protected Fauna at Public Exhibitions.*—This has been mentioned in several of our previous Annual Reports. With its recurrence during the present year, strong exception was again taken by this Council. Several members of Council and of the body of the Society also wrote to the authorities and to the press, but without avail. This is not only a question of preservation of fauna, but of cruelty; while there is the constant incentive to observers—many of whom are only school children—to keep and hold our native birds and animals as pets. In the recent instance in Sydney, Kangaroos and Wallabies were contained in a tiny enclosure on a department store floor, Kookaburras in a small cage, and large numbers of Parrots and other birds crowded into small cages or boxes. Apart from the general question of the cruelty involved, how can we expect any abatement of the craze for keeping Kookaburras, Magpies and Seagulls, while such exhibitions are openly supported and used as attractions to boost privately organised exhibitions.

(h) *Emu Invasion in Western Australia.*—In our Annual Report for 1931-32, we referred to an invasion of Emus from the drier parts of Western Australia toward the farming areas. While we

neither disputed nor confirmed the necessity for destruction we did hold that the measures which had been reported as having been taken—the despatch of military machine-gunners (!) and other cumbersome and cruel means—while obviously ineffective, would conduce to that unreasonable and unfeeling attitude towards our wild fauna which, sadly enough, is so often manifested. Our action at the time was supported by a great wave of indignation expressed through the press of Australia.

There was a recurrence of this trouble in the latter half of 1935, when a great invasion of Emus was reported from the north-eastern wheat belt in Western Australia, and again came the suggestions for the sending out of machine-gunners. We immediately got into touch with the Western Australian Government protesting against the proposal to kill by machine gun or any other cruel method, at the same time clearly indicating our recognition of the need for doing something effective to help the farmer. We understand that many thousands of Emus were killed, chiefly by poison and that large numbers died from hunger and thirst. We were assured by the Western Australian authorities that machine-gunning was not likely to be allowed, and, on this occasion, had not occurred.

(i) *Protection of Australian Bustard in Western Australia.*—Towards the end of 1935 we co-operated with our Western Australian correspondents in urging the Government to declare the Australian Bustard or Plain Turkey, a protected bird in the western State. We are glad therefore to inform members that the movement was successful and this grand bird is now on the protected list in the west, as in the east. We would like to register our thanks to the Western Australian Government and to Mr. Fred Aldrich, the Chief Inspector of Fisheries and Game there, for this timely action.

(j) *"Snow" Magpies Poisoned.*—In September, 1935, we received information that 18 White-back Magpies (also called "Snow" Magpie, because it occurs in our Australian highland and southern country liable to snowfall) had been poisoned by baits laid indiscriminately in the Berridale (Monaro) District of New South Wales. Very many of these useful and beautiful songsters have been poisoned by rabbit baits and by baits illicitly laid for Possums.

(k) *Advertisements for Protected Birds.*—During this Report period several cases of open advertising for the supply or return of birds protected under the law have come under our official notice and have been reported to the proper authorities. In one rather flagrant case, in which a dealer invited supply from country parts, we approached the management of the daily paper concerned, asking that such advertisements should be refused, but were "regretfully" refused!

(l) *Protection of Horned Dragon.*—Most people are aware of the existence of the Horned Dragon Lizard, also known as the Moloch Lizard, Mountain Devil and other names. For some time past a number of these quaint little ant-eating reptiles have been regularly

brought back from southern central Australia, by way of the Transcontinental Railway. In practically all such cases the lizard soon dies.

With a view to ensuring the preservation of the lizard (which, of course, is quite harmless) in areas contiguous to the main routes of travel in the heart of Australia, we approached the South Australian Government. Our suggestions were courteously received. Finally, after investigation, the South Australian Premier informed us that the Government was prepared to give this reptile the desired protection, but that it had been found that there was no legal power under existing Acts. The matter will be kept forward. In the meantime, we have asked for the necessary legislation to be passed as soon as convenient. It seems probable to us that if a special Act of Parliament is passed for this purpose, the lizard will become so famous as to ensure its protection. The Moloch is most typical of our Australian internal arid regions.

(m) *Tree Destruction on Scenic Roads.*—We have, in these Reports, often had cause to refer to the great destruction—oftentimes most shameful and unreasonable—of our native trees along our public highways. Various authorities have been noticeably culpable here, and, unfortunately, none more so than the Postmaster-General's Department. We have seen whole avenues of the most beautiful natural-grown Eucalypts cut down to make way for a wire or two, great Northern Figs, with enormous picturesque buttressed roots, slaughtered "just in case" a limb might some day fall on a wire, and many instances of isolated destruction of trees—some of great size and age—which might have been avoided with a little care and thought for the future.

Recently there have been several complaints of the destruction of natural avenues of Eucalypts on scenic roads by the Department. Some of these came to us direct, some through the press, and a notable one by the Honorable Mr. Bruxner, while Acting Premier for New South Wales. Correspondence has been carried on with Senator the Honorable A. J. McLachlan, the present Postmaster-General for the Commonwealth of Australia, in regard to this old trouble. Mr. McLachlan assures us of his support and his great interest in roadside tree preservation. We have thanked him for this, but, without in any way casting doubts upon his intentions in the matter, it is our duty to point out that we have often had such assurances from the Department, or from his predecessors, without adequate results. *What is required is a definite statement of policy as to roadside tree preservation.* There are no avenues better grown or more suited to the highway—scenically or from the point of view of shade for man and beast—than these natural growths, so beautiful in their glorious arboreal asymmetry. Most of them are quite irreplaceable by artificial re-growth. Some of the trees destroyed have been hundreds of years old. Departmental officers who are often most sympathetic, should have a definite instruction that the Departmental head will frown on

all such destruction, unless every possible alternative has first been explored. Nor should any reasonable extra expense involved, debar the carrying of lines by another route, or the erection of lines armed against wear and tear of tree abrasion, in certain cases (as is so often done in other places). Tree lovers—and their name is legion—do not expect the impossible, but they do expect reasonable understanding and foresight from the authorities concerned with roadwork or roadside erections.

(n) *Destruction of Flora in Brisbane Reserve.*—Acting upon the suggestion of some of our Queensland correspondents and in the light of personal acquaintance with the matter by some members of Council, it was decided to write to the Lord Mayor of Brisbane re vandalism, resulting in destruction of flora, in the vicinity of White's Hill, and the adjacent Pine Mountain and other land nearby—trees of fine growth being taken away; scrubby suckers replacing this great beauty. It was pointed out that the Council had in this area, a splendid opportunity to protect and develop some wonderful Nature resources, making this a beauty spot of the city. Its wonderful views were greatly enhanced by the forest growth which was being destroyed, with the accompanying bird and animal life slowly disappearing. Copies of the letter were also forwarded to the Brisbane daily press. In replying, the Lord Mayor thanked the Society for its interest in the matter, and, at the same time, stated that Rangers had been appointed. The destruction of plant life on the reserves had caused the City Council much concern, and the Council would do its utmost to check the trouble.

(o) *Callistemon Protection.*—A request has been made to the Minister responsible that the whole of the species of Callistemon or Bottlebrush indigenous to New South Wales should be added to the list of plants protected under the Wild Flower and Native Plants Protection Act. This is under consideration at the moment. It will be further referred to in our next Report.

3. SANCTUARIES AND NATIONAL RESERVES

(a) *Proposed Grave Misuse of Park Lands.*—While there have been many proposals for the whittling away or alienation of national reserves and park lands of various types, from time to time, and also many actual instances of such misuse being perpetrated, probably no proposal has so shocked the public of New South Wales into a sense of the necessity for urgent preventive action being taken, as did that which was discovered during February of the present year, and which related to a proposal by a broadcasting company to lease nineteen acres of park lands overlooking Sydney Harbour, at Chowder Head. We use the word "discovered" advisedly, because negotiations had already proceeded for some time between the broadcasting people—a private corporation—and the Lands Department, before the matter became known to the public. Immediately it was known, a

strong protest was entered at our instance, by the Parks and Playgrounds Movement—with which this Society is affiliated—and was communicated to the Minister for Lands, the Mosman Municipal Council and to the press.

Following this, and after much newspaper discussion and condemnation, the proposal was discussed by the Council of this Society at its meeting on March 2nd; when, after a full discussion, the following resolution was passed:

RESOLVED, that the Council of the Wild Life Preservation Society expresses strong disapproval of the proposed leasing of portion of Chowder Reserve to a Broadcasting company, considering such a proposal opposed to public interest, and subversive of the principles on which the Society was founded.

It was also resolved to confer with the Parks and Playgrounds Movement, indicating this strong opposition, and, at the same time, asking that body for an expression of opinion as to the desirability of passing certain resolutions, concomitant to the resolution opposing the application, in view of the grave danger of interference with our parks and Nature reserves that had been revealed by (1) the attitude of the New South Wales Lands Department in actually considering officially any application for such lands from private individuals, and (2) the action of the Minister for Lands in submitting an application of this nature for enquiry by the Metropolitan Land Board.

In the midst of the public clamour that was raised, it was stated by the Minister that the application would not be granted. But this has not allayed the uneasiness in the public mind on the basic aspect of the matter, as there have been numerous instances of a departure from the general principle of non-interference with park and national reserve areas. Working in concert with the Parks and Playgrounds Movement, we have been endeavouring to have the matter brought to some sort of finality leading to the bringing down of legislation that would prohibit interference with any such area except by parliamentary sanction. In the meantime the matter will be kept alive.

(b) *Lake Urana*.—During March of this year, an announcement was made by the New South Wales Government that a sum of money would be made available to drain Lake Urana, in the Riverina District of New South Wales. Great opposition immediately arose in many quarters to the scheme, and ultimately it was dropped. The Council of this Society considered the matter at its meeting in May, and decided to strongly oppose this proposal. In view of the possibility of such a scheme being brought forward at some later date, we would like our members and friends to be seized with the facts as set out by us in our letter to the Chief Secretary.

Lake Urana, which is a wild life sanctuary, plays a very important part in the conservation of wild birds—mainly water fowl—in our inland country generally. There are extraordinarily few places inland, in which water occurs in those wide shallow depressions which are so necessary to the stabilising of various species of wild fowl at the approach of, or during, drought periods. It is quite clear that unless we take the most stringent steps to preserve such places, many of our birds, such as Wild Ducks, Godwits, Sillies, White Herons, Black Swans, etc., will ultimately suffer the most serious depletion, bordering on extinction. This does not appear so at the moment, yet the numbers of these wild fowl nowadays, as compared with even thirty years ago, are very small.

In the meantime many of the Darling River country earth depressions have been almost or entirely wiped out by encroaching sand and dust movements, in the general erosion which is taking place. Incidentally it is worthy of mention that this, like all such depressions, acts as a great relief to flood waters, which it stores for a time, and, at the same time, gives a considerable feed to the sub-artesian supplies of many square miles of the neighbourhood. We are glad to know that this valuable sanctuary is safe, at least for the present.

(c) *Deewhy Lagoon Reserve*.—Last year we spoke of the action taken by this Society, in conjunction with the Parks and Playgrounds Movement and other bodies, with a view to the permanent reservation of the low-lying land round the small lagoon at Deewhy, New South Wales (a little north of Manly). We are pleased to be able to record that the Warringah Shire Council has now acquired the land, and, we understand, intends to restore, as far as possible, the native flora of the area, and to do everything possible to protect and retain the wild stock of Black Swans which perennially make their home there. In many respects this little sanctuary is quite unique in Australia. We trust that the Shire Council, whose charge this interesting spot has now come into permanently, will not yield to any suggestions as to putting in the type of "improvements" which will make of it "just another park." There has been some fear of this recently, but we have the Shire Council's assurance in the meantime that this will not be done.

(d) *Garrawarra Primitive Park*.—The two small areas of land within this area which we spoke of in the last Report, and which it was hoped, would be resumed by Government, are still in the hands of their private occupiers, and there seems no immediate likelihood of Government taking any action, unless strong pressure is brought to bear. As long as such areas exist in the heart of a Nature reserve it will be idle to look upon the park as subserving the purpose for which it was set aside.

(e) *Baker's Lagoon a Sanctuary*.—Acting upon our representations, the Chief Secretary has gazetted Baker's Lagoon, near Richmond, N.S.W., as a sanctuary for birds and animals. This Society

regards the lagoon as of great importance in the saving of our bird life, and trusts that our people will see to it that the protection thus given is not transgressed in any way. Aquatic birds particularly find it a most useful stopping place between parts of the County of Cumberland water areas—which are all too few—and water sanctuaries farther west. For public information we might state that not only is the surface of the lagoon proper a sanctuary, but also a surrounding area within 20 chains radius of the margin of the lagoon.

(f) *McDonald Park, Ararat*.—This is the wild flower sanctuary at Bridal Hill, Ararat, Victoria, which we mentioned in our last Report, and concerning which we were in correspondence with the authorities in Melbourne and with our representative, Miss Banfield, at Ararat. Satisfactory arrangements having been made with the Forests Commission of Victoria, an area of 160 acres has been set aside. This is bounded by 1,000 acres of permanent forest reserve: Miss Banfield has kept us posted as to developments there, and it is clear that this will be one day one of the most attractive wild flower reserves in Australia. The trustees appointed to look after the area are receiving the most gratifying support from various bodies of citizens in their efforts to beautify the reserve and keep it free from encroachment or interference.

(g) *Kosciuszko Sanctuary*.—Our local representative in the district, Mr. Amos Williams, has reported to us that preservation work in this sanctuary was being very faithfully carried out, with excellent results to the fauna. The Society's thanks have been sent to Mr. Williams personally for the fine work which he has put in himself for many years in this district. The Council felt, in sending our congratulations to Mr. Williams that if many members were to carry out such faithful work in their respective areas, there would be much benefit to the cause and less need for the law in enforcing protection.

(h) *Proposed Toonumbar National Park*.—This proposal for a national park at Toonumbar, which the Casino Branch of the Wild Life Preservation Society has been pushing for some time past, is being given our attention, and will be dealt with in detail in our next Annual Report. Mr. Ben. Carlill, of Shannon Brook, Casino, N.S.W. the President of the local branch, has already worked very hard on this project. The major portion is already covered by the Toonumbar State Forest, and is in the land district of Casino. The land is mostly scrub—rough, wild and very beautiful, too rough for settlement and the home centre of the Albert Lyre Bird, Rifle Bird, Bower Birds and other scrub dwellers.

(i) *Sussex Inlet Sanctuary*.—A movement initiated among some public-minded residents about St. George's Basin and Sussex Inlet, on the south coast of New South Wales, for the declaration of a number of privately held areas and some public lands there as a sanctuary under the Birds and Animals Protection Act, has occupied the Council's attention for some time past, and is nearing consummation. In the meantime a number of the residents have been

appointed as Honorary Rangers, upon our recommendation. Details will be furnished in our next Annual Report.

(j) *National Park Administration in New South Wales*.—A survey of our Annual Reports for many years reveals how much of our time has been occupied in discussing and considering invasions of this park or that, for purposes other than those for which the public believe they are intended, and sometimes flying in the face of the charter under which they have been dedicated. Vandalism and spoliation—often official—have been reported and representations made thereon to Trustees and to Ministers of Government. The question has engaged the attention of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement also since its inception, and attempts have been made to get successive Governments to face up fairly to the question and undertake a more rational system of National Park government.

But the present reference relates chiefly to the administration of the National Park, in the Illawarra District of New South Wales, immediately south of Sydney. Year after year have complaints been made, by ourselves, by other bodies interested in the perpetuation of Nature reserves and parks, and by numerous writers in the press. To deal with this question adequately would take more space than we can allow on this occasion, but the matter is of such vital importance and has such a bearing upon the whole question of park administration, that we feel it necessary to give a few highlights on this National Park spoliation as presented to the Council at its meeting in June of this year, and, in the main, taken from our past Annual Reports:

- (1) 1910-1914 Destruction and capture and (in some cases) export of Lyre Birds.
- (2) 1906-1920 First gradual, and then rapid, destruction of Rock Wallabies and other ground marsupials, by gunners and dogs.
- (3) Introduction of Deer and continued destruction of native shrubs and other native ground flora.
- (4) Sporadic destruction of trees in many parts over a long period, by campers, fishermen and holiday makers.
- (5) Planless destruction of trees in making of paths and tracks and use of beautiful timber trees for making temporary bridges and culverts, because the trees happened to be convenient to the road makers.
- (6) Laying down of main routes through the park without proper planning for the saving of particular trees or beautiful clumps of trees—which themselves were often a great joy to the beholder.
- (7) 1921: Two timber sawmills allowed to be erected in National Park. Agreement entered into with a Coal Company (5 years) for the sale of large timber trees out of

the park. A crowning shame, only stopped through our urgent action and a threat to take legal action against the Trustees.

- (8) Attempt made to get Bill through Parliament, enabling lands entrusted to the care of trustees of national reserves to mortgage or sell such! Almost unbelievable, but true. Stopped by our urgent action with the aid of the Herald.
- (9) Cutting down of over 100 healthy avenue trees in Rawson Avenue. Cutting down of fine old planted trees at Audley.
- (10) 1926: Proposal to alienate portion of the park and to remove tree cover from a large area, for the purpose of establishing golf links.
- (11) 1929: Our suggestion and offer to the Trustees that we would introduce Koalas to the park, in suitable spots, if they would preserve them. Trustees' answer that they could not guarantee protection.
- (12) 1931-1933: Continual fight over campers and actual permissive occupancies. Our threat to take legal action and Trustees' belated promise that these would be terminated.
- (13) 1934-1935: Continuation of old fight against introduced Deer and Trustees' statement of their "concern" also.
- (14) 1935-36: Putting down of roads not needed for the inspection of the park and without regard to the fact that there should be no through—or trunk—roads in this supposed Nature Park.
- (15) 1936: Proposals to "improve" and "beautify" areas of the park, by putting in of pretty gardens of cultivated plants.

We have asked the Minister for Lands to allow us to discuss this matter with him. In doing this we made it clear that while there was no personal attack conveyed or intended, in regard to any of the present Trustees, it was felt that their actions, however honest such might be, appeared to indicate a lack of understanding of what this great national reserve stands for—further, that their actions were only a culmination of so much that had happened in the past, so adversely affecting the park, its fauna and flora, and which a succession of trustees appeared to have failed to recognise. The Minister has asked us to place our representations before him, in writing. In doing this, we will need the energetic support of our members and friends, and for this reason place the facts in a condensed form before them here.

(k) Centennial Park "Improvements" and Effect on Wild Fowl
—From time to time Nature lovers have been very concerned at the interference with wild life in the Centennial Park, Sydney, by alterations involving the cutting out of native flora—particularly the various scrub patches—and the filling in or draining of ponds which

were the homes of so many native wild fowl. In past years this Society has taken the matter up in its reports and in the Press. Recently the position has become very acute through the filling in of some particularly valuable areas to make play spaces, and additions to open park space.

The matter has been brought before Council at each of its recent meetings; especially at the September one when a strong complaint was referred to us by the Parks and Playgrounds Movement of New South Wales. The latter body, like ourselves, as citizens, desire that every possible facility should be given to the people to indulge in play and recreation; but we feel that special places like this park—particularly places provided with open water spaces, which are so rare in our Australian cities and towns, should be religiously kept—or that the pond areas and their surrounding shores, should be kept—for the preservation of the water and swamp birds, which are almost wiped out in the Sydney district. At one time many species of birds and large numbers of some of the water birds could always be found living and breeding in this park, about the lakes, but year after year their numbers have become less.

As regards actual recreation for the human visitors to such areas; we feel that all will agree that the sight of these wild birds alone is a very restful and satisfying thing—and this is recognised everywhere in the world of course.

The Council has asked the authorities controlling this park to see that the most sympathetic treatment is accorded these areas, with a view to restoring, as far as may be, their pristine character as bird refuges, and that all tree and shrub planting schemes will be worked out with this in view, as far as possible. We hope to again refer to this important matter in a later report.

4. GENERAL

(a) *Bequest from Estate of our Late Ex-Councillor William Cope.*—For a number of years of his life the late William Cope was a member of this Council. He died September 24, 1933, leaving a portion of his estate to be devoted to the support of fauna and flora preservation work. During the past year we have received from his executors—the Perpetual Trustee Company and Mr. Donald MacIntyre—a sum of £78/7/-, as a contribution toward our funds. The Council desires to record here its great indebtedness to our late friend and to his executors for this kind remembrance of our work. We assure the executors that the money will be well and carefully spent.

(b) *Destruction of Old Trees in Argyle Place, Sydney.*—At the end of May of this year we received a number of complaints as to the destruction of some beautiful Moreton Bay Fig Trees which ornamented Argyle Place—a rather quaint little park in an old world setting, in one of the oldest parts of Sydney. Investigation showed that out of twelve large trees of mature age there; several had already

been cut down, and others were marked for the axe. An immediate attempt was made, by personal approach to the Lord Mayor of Sydney, and to the City Council, to stave this destruction, but without success. Strong and bitter comment regarding this official vandalism was heard on all sides; in the columns of the press, and in the proceedings of various organisations. Argyle Place had a quiet dignity and charm, in its peculiar setting, not possessed by any other area in any of our capital cities. It has been the resort of artists and photographers for years. The space under the trees has been a regular playground for the children of the neighbourhood, while the umbrageous shade of the trees has been a most grateful thing to the many people who have been used to resting there in the hot days of Summer. In addition, the trees were the common resting and sleeping place of flocks of birds.

Other bodies also have taken this matter up, notably the Parks and Playgrounds Movement and the Tree Lovers' Civic Leagues. Action is still proceeding, as no good reason was forthcoming to account for the destruction. The Mayor, the Town Clerk and certain Aldermen of the Council gave different reasons; but the most pernicious one—voiced by the Town Clerk—is too dangerous to be left unheeded. We were told that the trees were "dirty." By this argument most of the ornamental trees of Sydney and Melbourne might be cut out. On this point, as indicating the tenor of the various newspaper articles in support of our action, we might quote from the leading article of a daily paper in Sydney, which said:—

"It might be as well, while the Science Bureau is searching from Azerbaijan to Zacatecas for drought-resisting plants, if it were to seek as well for ornamental trees which would not drop any leaves, and would thus win the heart of municipal authorities. Whether there are any such trees, however, is doubtful. Perhaps if some nice cast-iron ones could be manufactured for the Sydney City Council to use in the streets it would be a splendid solution of the difficulty raised by those dirty Argyle Place fig-trees."

(c) *Proposed "Bird Park" at Wentworth Falls.*—On two occasions during this Report period we were asked to support a project for the establishment of a so-called Bird Park at Wentworth Falls. As outlined by its promoters, the proposal, which had a commercial basis, was that an area should be put under wire netting and here certain birds would be allowed their limited freedom, to the delight of the customers or guests of the establishment. We were also invited to nominate one of our officers as a patron of the establishment. Those of our members who live in the Blue Mountains will have noted the newspaper controversy which has raged in some of the papers there, in regard to this proposal.

After discussing the scheme, Council decided that it could not vary its consistent attitude of many years past in such matters, as it felt that all such proposals are inimical—either directly or by example

—to the proper preservation of our wild life. For that reason also patronage of this organisation was refused. We informed the promoters and also the Chief Secretary, whose support to our stand was invited.

(d) *League for Nature Protection in Poland.*—This League, under the enthusiastic chairmanship of Professor Dr. W. Rydzewski, arranged an Exhibition of Nature Protection at Warszawa (Warsaw) during September. We were asked to contribute printed matter, posters, reports, etc., for the "outlandish" or foreign department of the exhibition. A parcel of Reports, Folders, Posters and Coloured Certificate, also some of our Badges, were forwarded in time for the Exhibition.

(e) *Wild Life Preservation Exhibition at Lucknow, India.*—During September our late Honorary Treasurer, Mr. Walter Burley Griffin, the noted Town Planner, Engineer and Architect, wrote to us from Lucknow, India, forwarding a letter from Mr. Hasin Abid Jafri, one of the Honorary Secretaries of the All-India Conference for the Preservation of Wild Life, asking for material to assist in an exhibition to be held in Lucknow from December 5, 1936 till February 4, 1937. Mr. Griffin is the architect and planner of the whole exposition, called "The United Provinces Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition," and has made a special provision for a beautiful pavilion—of which a sketch was sent—to house the wild life exhibits. We sent a collection of material somewhat on the lines of that sent to Warsaw.

One very significant passage in Mr. Griffin's letter should be quoted. He says:

"After all these thousands of years of intensive occupation, the problem here of wild life and conservation has now, with the advent of Europeanism, become as desperate as anywhere."

(f) *Contact with Organisations Abroad.*—During the past period we have maintained contact with various related organisations abroad in many places, and have dealt with a great many questions affecting protection of animals and birds, sanctuaries and national reserves, trade in skins and in live animals, etc. Among these bodies should be mentioned ULAWS London, the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire, the R.S.P.C.A., London, the Scottish S.P.C.A. at Edinburgh, the International Journal of Animal Protection (Lindesay G. Langwill, Editor), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, several organisations in Europe, the National Park Service at Washington, etc.

(g) *Correspondence, Advice and General Services.*—As stated at the outset it is impossible in such a Report to encompass all our activities—even all the important ones (will members please note this)—but it should be mentioned here that a large amount of the Honorary Secretary's time has been taken up in correspondence with

the public, in furnishing information and advice by letter and over the telephone, and in co-operating with other organisations whose aims or work may reach over, here and there, into our own specialised domain. We are glad to do this, but may we again remind both members and the general public that this service costs money, although carried out so economically at present. *Much more might be done if we had the funds to expand our work.*

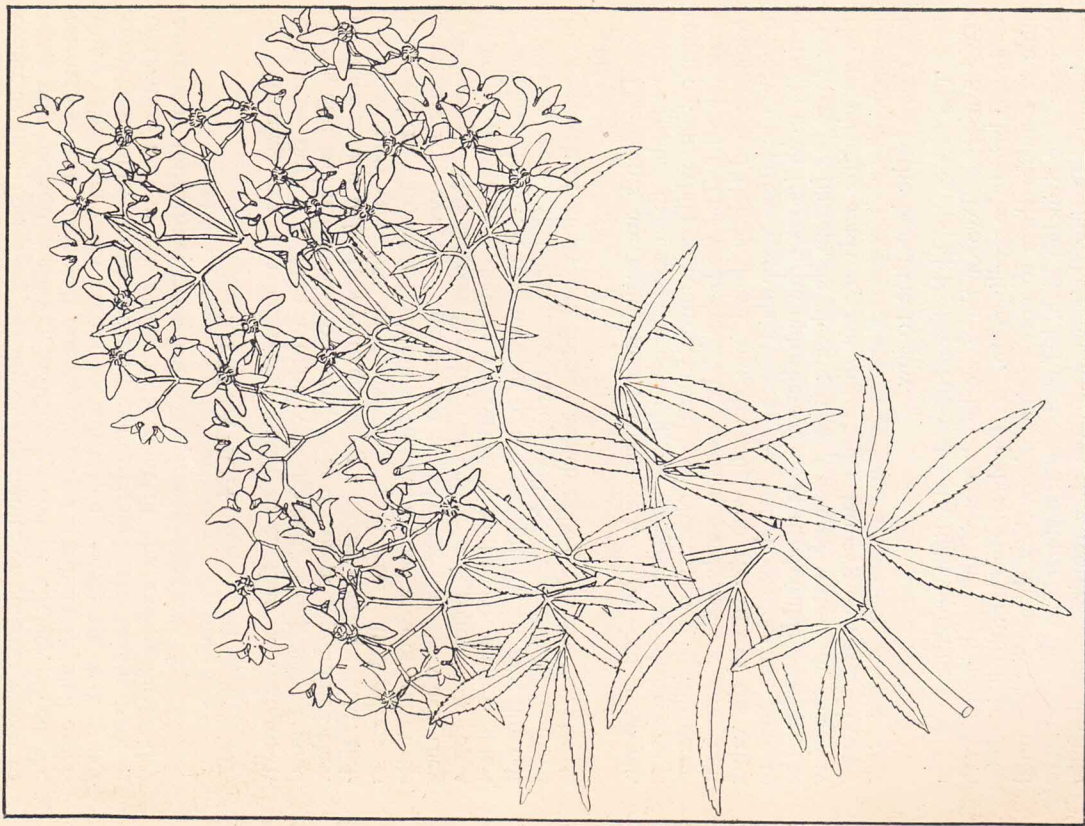
(h) *ANZAAS Congress in New Zealand.*—As this Report is being published on the eve of the congress of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, we desire particularly to refer to this great science meeting and wish the members every success in their efforts to gather and to spread science and knowledge generally. WLPsA delegates to the General Council of this Auckland Conference will be our President, Mr. Wm. Geo. Kett, Mr. Edwin Cheel, the well-known Australian botanist, and Captain E. V. Sanderson, one of our members, who is the President of the New Zealand Forest and Bird Protection Society, at Wellington. The kind thoughts of our members and friends will go with these delegates in their important work.

OURSELVES AND MEMBERSHIP.

(a) *Corporate Life Membership.*—In our last Report we mentioned the introduction of School Corporate Life Membership, and spoke of the fine work of our first School Corporate Life Member—St. George Girls' High School, at Kogarah, N.S.W. During the present period we extended the system of Corporate Life Membership to Municipal and other bodies. We are very pleased therefore to be able to record that one municipality—Bankstown, near Sydney—has linked up with us as our first Local Governing Member. We give this Council a very hearty welcome to our ranks and trust that their united membership will be of mutual advantage to us and to the cause which we stand for. One other Council—Wingadee Shire—sent us their good wishes and a donation of one guinea. The headquarters of this Shire are at Coonamble, N.S.W. Other Councils have sent us their good wishes and congratulations on our work. We hope to have several with us as Corporate Members in the near future.

(b) *Members' Subscriptions.*—With dolorous regularity we repeat our appeal to members to pay up and help to keep the cause going. During the ensuing year we shall be going to the expense and trouble of writing personal letters to many of our friends whose names (but not always their subscriptions!) are on our card index. *Will they kindly take this reminder so as to save our clerical work.*

(c) *Resignation of President.*—During the present year, Mr. Roy F. Bennett retired from the presidency which he had held since the latter half of 1930. Council has placed on record its keen appreciation of Mr. Bennett's help in carrying on our work, and we desire to add here our personal thanks also.



CHRISTMAS BUSH *Ceratotpetalum gummiferum*

The genus *Ceratotpetalum* is confined to Australia. There are two species in New South Wales—*C. gummiferum*, shown above and *C. apetalum*, the Coachwood, which occurs in the brush gullies. There is one species in Queensland, *C. Virchowii*, which occurs in mountainous regions.

—Drawn by Jean Colditz.

delectable as it appears. Sometimes the calyx fails to enlarge or to colour at all. This is not usually due to failure of pollination, but to some physiological condition induced by soil or climate, when the strength of the plant will not permit of its attaining its final ambition. This sometimes occurs in cultivation, where the soil is not entirely suitable. It has occurred in many plants this season, both in cultivation and in the bush, on account of the extraordinary dry conditions which have prevailed.

CULTIVATION

Nothing graces a cultivated patch more than a well-grown Christmas Bush. It likes a light, well-drained, loamy soil of good depth, and will not flourish on sand, or heavy or poorly-drained clay. *On such soils it will often struggle along without making much headway for many years but will never be a good tree.* It does not do to crowd the Christmas Bush out—it likes a good area of soil for its spreading root system. The blooms may be cut lavishly when they are mature. This is good for the tree, and if it is followed up by a little pruning to keep the tree a good shape, and to cut out the oldest of the laterals—or, if it is tending to become spindly, by pinching out the main stem—the flowering period will be immediately followed by a growth of glossy red foliage, which makes the plant a picture again.

The plants are easily raised from seed. The seed, however, must be fresh. Even seed a season old will not give a good percentage germination, while only an occasional seed older than this, will germinate at all. The seed should be sown in sandy soil or very light loam, pressed tightly down into the soil, with the tips of the calyx segments pointing upwards (so that the first shoot does not have to twist to push its way through the soil). *It is advisable to water the box from the bottom* by placing it in a tray of water. In this way the germinating seeds are not disturbed. January or early February—when the calyx segments are withering, to indicate that the seeds are ripe—is the best time to sow.

The boxes should be kept covered with light brush or in a Tea Tree nursery. Two or three weeks—longer if the seed is not fresh—should bring the seedlings up. After about two months it is advisable to transfer them to pots or tins, where they should be left until they are 6 to 8 inches high, before being transferred to their permanent homes. During their nursery days they require to be skilfully and gradually introduced to hardened conditions. If they are allowed to remain under cover too long, they will succumb immediately they are exposed to the open. To remove the cover of leaves gradually is the best plan; and they should all be removed before the seedlings are transplanted. If the seedlings are raised in the nursery, the boxes should be moved to various positions where the covering of Tea Tree is not so thick.

FIGHTING THE BUSHFIRE. NEED FOR NATIONAL ORGANISATION

By DAVID G. STEAD

"Fire is a Good Servant, but a Very Bad Master!" Probably there is no country in the world that needs so seriously to take this slogan to heart, as does Australia. For the recurrent bushfire is one of our worst enemies—equally of the primary producer, the forester and the conservationist, interested in the maintenance of our bush-land fauna and flora. This is so well known, really, that it almost seems like an idle reiteration of the fact to mention it here. Yet the calmness with which the community as a whole accepts this terrible menace, as a kind of natural concomitant to advancing summer, is a sure sign that we have a long way to go before we undertake that State-wide, and even national, organisation, which is absolutely essential if we are to defeat this all-devouring demon, or even to minimise to any appreciative extent, the annual toll of marred or destroyed forest lands, of wasted and ravaged farm lands, buildings and stock, of our wild bird life, and of our flowering plants.

On various occasions in past years this matter of the bushfire has occupied an important place in the annual reports of the Wild Life Preservation Society, while the writer has repeatedly stressed it in a number of publications and in public addresses; but the present time seems to be particularly opportune for a revival of attention to it, in view of the calamitous forest, grass, and fodder-crop, fires—accompanied in some instances by losses of livestock, farm buildings and residences—which have occurred in many places in the eastern parts of Australia, more particularly in the coastal bushlands, during the last few months. No doubt, with proper widespread understanding, most of these fires could have been prevented; but, without for the moment considering causes at all, it was very clear to myself and to many others that if we had been organised on a wide scale to combat such outbreaks, only a very few would have "got away," and most would have been quelled soon after their outbreak. In quite a number of instances where attempts were made to quell or to control these bushfires, long after they had started, and only when they were endangering settlements or homes, Herculean efforts were made by crowds of people—men, women and children; tourists, holiday-makers and residents—working as an unorganised rabble, with no proper direction, or at least no co-ordinated direction, and using the most primitive and even most ridiculous equipment. These will seem rather hard words to some, but experience over many seasons of bushfires shows them to be more than justified. For bushfire fighting is no new thing, whether in Australia or elsewhere, and experienced forestry men here, as well as many men on stations and farms,

have developed a technique, which, if applied through careful organisation everywhere, and availed of to the fullest extent, could be the means of stopping many a fire at the outset; thus saving vast destruction and much material loss.

PREVENTION, THE BEST CURE

While an occasional bushfire is brought about by what are termed natural causes, there is very good reason for thinking that nearly all are due to human carelessness, or to a deliberate attempt to fire undergrowth, or to destroy scrub, or even heavy forest for some selfish interest. Among those people who concern this Society very deeply in this connection, are the wild flower poachers, who will deliberately run a fire through scrubby lands, or through open forest to provide them with easy pickings for the following season. The trouble is that any fire may soon get beyond all bounds, and become a raging inferno, covering a vast area, and destroying thousands of pounds worth of human property, permanently damage timber trees, kill hundreds of head of stock, destroy the plant food in surface soils over vast areas, and generally blight the face of the land.

For many years past, Governments and the Legislature, Pastures Protection Boards, and the Local Governing bodies have endeavoured to prevent the occurrence of these fires. Everywhere that one goes in the country may be seen the calico notices relating to the "Careless Use of Fire"; counselling the greatest caution and telling of the pains and penalties awaiting a non-observance of these directions. This fire prevention has even been taught throughout the country schools, and gradually the people for the most part have caught the habit to such an extent that it has become second nature for most of them to carry it out to the letter. Wax matches are taboo, no one throws a lighted match to the ground, cigarette stubs are put out before being discarded, camp fires are placed in carefully selected spots and are religiously extinguished before being left, no furnace is carried into the field if it can be helped, and generally every precaution is taken.

In this connection the common slogan of this Society, which has been spread by us for years past, imprinted on the backs of our envelopes—"PREVENT BUSH FIRES: Put Out Matches, Butts and Camp Fires"—is well worth carrying in mind to be brought under the notice of the general public on every possible occasion. At the risk of repetition also we ask members and the public to remember another apt slogan, that "One Tree may make a Million Matches, but ONE MATCH MAY BURN A MILLION TREES."

But, notwithstanding the primary importance of prevention, there is no blinking the fact that the fires are still occurring, and, I fear, are likely to for many a day. My main objective, therefore, in this article, is to emphasise the organisation to deal with the

fires once they have been discovered. Most of these fires have small beginnings, of course, and if they could be nipped in the bud, so to speak, they might at the very worst resolve themselves into a series of small outbreaks which could be readily controlled with even the primitive fire-fighting equipment which, until recent years, was at the disposal of the farmer and grazer—and even to-day only exists in man-made places. But it is not only the great fire which is to be feared. In some years we have comparatively small outbreaks in numbers all over the land, which, in the aggregate, take a far greater toll from the primary producer and from the bushlands, than the more isolated conflagration.

MENACE MUST BE FACED

At whatever angle we approach the bushfire menace—whether in the interests of primary production, the saving of our forests and timber resources, the preservation of our glorious flowering bushlands, or the security of our isolated bush homes and villages—we are forced to the conclusion that unless we grapple with the problem as we should not only will this great load continue, but, in certain directions, almost irreparable damage will result. And grappling with it does not mean that we come to certain pious decisions only, but that, both individually and collectively, we look upon the job as one to be done by ourselves, where we are conveniently placed, and by the whole community working in close co-operation. This means not only the drilling of ourselves in proper methods of dealing with bush and forest fires at the seat of the outbreak, but of the organisation of community work on a large scale throughout the country.

I believe that this is not nearly so difficult as it might at first appear. The fact that many people are thinking and talking of this co-operative work at the moment is an indication that the time was never more ripe for carrying it out. In isolated places at the present time, in every district that one can think of, every man naturally regards himself as a potential fire-fighter. That is to say, he calculates that he is there if he is called upon. But that is not quite what we want. Each of those men should be part of a great organisation, split up into suitable units, throughout the length and breadth of the country. This is not a Utopian idea, as a few may think, but is considered to be a really practicable thing by most of those who are familiar with the lay-out of our population and with the causes underlying the propagation of our grass and bush fires. Of course, it is only fair to say that some parts are fairly well organised already; but, taking the country by and large, this organisation does not amount to much.

OLD-FASHIONED METHODS.

In moving about the country one has often seen or heard of instances in which timely action has saved many thousands of acres of well-grassed land or large areas of crops, or valuable forest lands.

Even on the great open runs, some of the largest fires in our history have had quite insignificant beginnings; and, with modern field fire fighting equipment, and our rapid modern transport, might have been readily dealt with practically at the point of origin. Some of these conflagrations have raged along on a three hundred mile front, sweeping all before them. Just imagine the value of "the save" in such a case, if the fire, or conjoined fires, could have been attacked and quelled in the earliest stages. It is not too much to say that such a save in pasturage alone would have paid for all the field fire equipment in existence in the State in which the fire occurred. And what applies to the country at large more than applies to the individual—one good save will pay for even the most elaborate (if useful) station or farm fire fighting outfit, besides maintaining the farmer, his stock, and crops, throughout the most dangerous time of the year.

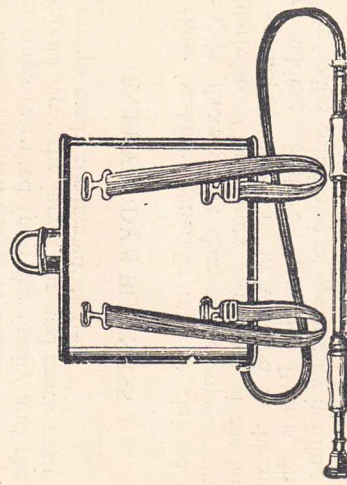
In most cases one hears of attempts to stay the progress of a bushfire by "beating it out." Sometimes the attempt is successful; more often it is not! But, where it is, at what a cost in scorched and exhausted helpers! And the fine and courageous bucket brigade! Think of the prodigious waste of human energy that often goes on in quelling fires in country where a plentiful supply of water is available. I am not making light of this serious matter, but surely no one can claim that these are either scientific or practical ways of dealing with the terrible bushfire menace when we leave it to the beaters or the bucket line.

Many types of fires cannot possibly be extinguished by the beater, while the amount of water that is thrown from even one bucket in the generally ineffective attempt to stay the path of the fire demon would, if used according to modern dictates, prove a very formidable opponent to its progress. It is really astonishing what a long way a little water can go towards extinguishing a fire in its incipient stages, or, in staying its progress across country, when it is properly applied; but proper application is certainly not in throwing it out of a bucket, or even from a water cart or tank, without pressure.

PORTABLE FIRE-FIGHTING OUTFITS

During the progress of the Empire Forestry Conference, which was held in Sydney a few years ago, I was much struck by the evidence given by one of the leading Canadian delegates in describing the measures taken by British Columbia in dealing with bushfires generally. Here they used large numbers of small (as well as large, in some instances) portable fire-fighting power sets. With such appliances the most remarkable success had been achieved even in fighting great forest fires. In the case of grass fires they had proved quite invaluable, just as has been found already in many parts of Australia.

I remember, a few years ago, being in the north-west during a rather bad time, when there were many fires about. In addition to all the usual types of fires there were a number here and there caused by lightning during "dry" electric storms. On one run, where there was an abundance of feed, the grass was lighted at least half a dozen times in various places, within the space of one afternoon, in sight of the homestead on blacksoil country. By the most strenuous work and employing every available person the fires were at last got under, but not until a large area of pasturage of great value had been destroyed. With the modern one-man knapsack-jet equipments, and other portable spraying outfits, which are available at a cost insignificant when compared with the value of their work, such fires could have been got under without great difficulty, and with the employment of only two or three persons! In this instance there was plenty of water available in the Barwon River nearby, and there were also old-fashioned water carts. The latter is often unwieldy and practically useless—except as a water carrier for the portable outfits. A current method of draining the water from such through a simple hose and nozzle, without spraying under pressure, is waste-



ONE-MAN KNAPSACK PRESSURE OUTFIT
FOR FIGHTING BUSH FIRES

ful of water and poor in result. Such an equipment, therefore, in the face of emergency, is generally of but little use, except as a supplement to the one-man apparatus

KNAPSACK PRESSURE OUTFIT

As the bushfire may be expected to make an occasional call almost anywhere, we should naturally expect to make an occasional call for its treatment, as we would for any of the other ills that beset us. Though we know that some fires cannot be checked until they have almost spent themselves, these are not the usual ones of the pastoral and farming districts, but more those of the forest lands. Even in the latter cases, the widespread damage is, as I have shown, largely the result of our general unpreparedness. Whatever reason there may

have been, up till a few years back, to accept the scourge with a certain amount of philosophy, that time has long since gone past, as we have now the means at hand to at least greatly minimise the effects of fire throughout the country. In effect, this means that we must look upon fire fighting equipment of one kind or another as a necessary adjunct to every selection, farm, and station and even village home, as well as suburban areas of our capital cities in proximity to scrub or bush lands. *That equipment should be the sort that gets the most out of every gallon of water that is used—for bushfire time is the time of at least relative water shortage; and anyway, there is the dead weight of water as a powerful argument against not using effectively every ounce that is carried to the scene of the fire, whether in a one-man outfit, or in a tank carried in a motor car or truck.*

For small establishments, the aim should be, as far as possible, to have a one-man outfit available for every person. Where a car is available a tank and suitable outfit should be kept handy for use at a moment's notice. The larger holdings should be equipped with a good supply of the one-man outfits to enable them to send out an emergency fire corps recruited from the family and the hands; and, in addition, should have the larger car and truck outfits fitted with high-pressure pumps ready for immediate use.

EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

Though these bushfires generally may be claimed to be everybody's business, in places where there are groups of small holdings, this is particularly so. Community ownership of the large tank and power pump should be aimed at, in addition to the small portable types on every holding. Pastures Protection Boards, Shire Councils, and other public bodies could also co-operate by holding one or more of the large equipments, to be used freely by the people of their districts. In a complete organisation of the people there will be in every district a number of the large fire-fighting outfits—including mobile ones for rapid movement by the house or town car, and still larger ones for the trucks. But in the majority of cases far and away the most effective means will be the one-man knapsack outfit, carried on the back, by as many men as can be got together and conveyed by car, or by the most rapid means, to the seat of the outbreak. A body of men armed as described, and spread out along the fire front, can frequently make short work of what might very quickly assume the proportions of a vast conflagration, involving miles of country.

FRONT LINE EQUIPMENT

Our forest rangers in New South Wales and Victoria and elsewhere are armed with these one-man knapsack outfits, with which they have already done great execution. In the United States, also, they are looked upon as front line equipment, and this speaks volumes

for their value in dealing with all classes of fires. These small appliances jet the water on to the fire under high pressure, and at the same time give the maximum of spread—and this combination, as everyone knows, gives the highest possible maximum of fire-fighting efficiency, whether one is dealing with a fire in a haystack or a house or a wheat crop or pastures or scrub. They are also extraordinarily economical in their use of the precious water, eking out the contents of, say, a forty-gallon car or truck water supply tank, to an unheard-of extent.

With the aid of the telephone and the motor car nowadays, fire-fighting is a very different proposition from what it was even a few years back; but, when, added to this, we have a series of non-costly fire fighting equipment units which may be brought into almost immediate action by every man working, either with his neighbour, or by himself, and which give a degree of efficiency (for the small amount of water used) which a short time ago was quite unattainable, there is no reason why, with the community organisation on a complete scale, the bushfire menace should not be robbed of much of its terrors.

BUSHFIRE BRIGADES

Of course, it is not sufficient even to have the most up-to-date fire fighting appliances, as lack of co-ordinative organisation may prevent such equipment being brought into its full and complete use. The aim, therefore, should be to get a complete linking up of every possible Governmental, Local Government, and other public agency, with the members of the general public working in full co-operation, so as to provide a complete series of bushfire fighting units throughout the country. In the timbered country, at least, forestry field officers are situated in many parts, and, as a rule, these are well equipped in knowledge and experience in ways and means of fighting forest and grass fires. They would probably make the best pivots of organisation; but the police, school teachers, honorary rangers, under Birds and Animals Protection Act and Wild Flowers and Native Plants Protection Act, to the number of several hundreds, with Mines and Lands officers, Shires, Pastures Protection Board, and agricultural officials everywhere, should be roped in to this great massing of the country people's forces to defeat the bushfire. With such a country-wide organisation, having the work of all its integral parts sufficiently correlated and co-ordinated we should have little to fear nationally, from the fire demon that now robs us of millions of pounds worth of our work in the development of Australia. Of course, as is known, there are already several bushfire brigades doing excellent work; but what is needed is an organisation of the whole countryside as one with its component units working individually, in small groups or in large armies, as might be necessary.

The beaters would still find a place in the army, certainly. But the bucket brigade would be "nowhere," as they are mere water

wasters. The beaters, though, would not take the important place that they do at present, except in comparatively rare cases. In this connection it should be remembered that, although inlanders are never blessed with too much water, the worst fires usually occur at the turn of a good season, when there is still a fair modicum of the precious fluid in tank, dam, billabong, or river; while, with the aid of the motor car or truck frequently town or city water supplies are available.

SETTING "ACTS" TO WORK

Organisation of these Bushfire Brigades has become farthest advanced in the State of Victoria, where tremendous efforts have been put forward by the Forests Commission of Victoria, backed up by the State Government. In New South Wales we have a most efficient Forestry Department and an excellent Bushfire Brigades Act. But Government has left it in the hands of Local Governing bodies, in the main, to see to the appointment or constitution of the district brigades. As the Chief Secretary of New South Wales said during the recent discussion and controversy over the great bushfires, "there is nothing to stop the operation of the Act." Just so. But what appears to be the main trouble in New South Wales is that there is nothing to start the operation of it, in most districts. As in the case of the operation of the Birds and Animals Protection Act, and the Wild Flowers and Native Plants Protection Act, with which we have had so much experience, it is not enough for Government to pass the Acts; Government must itself see to it that Acts of such widespread public importance are not implemented in any more or less accidental manner, but are set in motion, to the public advantage by the Government. In the present case it would appear that the most likely men to organise and co-ordinate the Bushfire Brigades throughout the country, are the Forestry Field Officers—who should also be the instructing officers.

There are many aspects of this question that I have been obliged to omit, owing to the necessary length of my article, but the main object has been to set people thinking on the question of co-ordinated action on proper lines. May I conclude with a little item which was partly responsible for my preparation of the article at the present juncture. This was a rather pathetic statement contained in a letter from the authorities in New South Wales responsible for the administration of the Wild Flowers and Native Plants Protection Act. My Society had asked them to enquire into some wild flower destruction reported in part of the beautiful Hawkesbury River country. After mentioning the activities of the Police in that connection, the letter concluded: "*The Reports also show that the bush on both sides of the road . . . has been burnt out by the bushfires and all the flora has been destroyed.*" Such reports are bound to come in indefinitely until we have a national organisation to beat the bushfires.

WILD LIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA. STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE, 1936

1935: July 1		1936: June 30	
To Balances:		By Printing, Stationery, Postage and other secretarial expenses	
Bank of New South Wales	144 16 5	Subscriptions—	14 5 10
Honorary Secretary	5 0 0	Parks & Playground Movement	10 0
Commonwealth Stock:		Annual Report & Wild Life Journal	23 16 6
3½% 1947	50 0 0	Postages on Journal	4 7 6
£100 4% 1941	82 10 0	Bank Charges and Exchange	11 0
£200 4% 1938	156 7 6	Science House.—Address Fee	1 1 0
Donations & Subscriptions		Balance:	
Sale of Journals	37 18 6	Bank of New South Wales	152 4 2
Interest on Bonds	13 18 9	Cash Honorary Secretary	5 0 0
£490 13 6		3½% 1047 £50 0 0	0
		£100 4% 1941	82 10 0
		£200 4% 1938	156 7 6
			£490 13 6

SYDNEY, 24th NOVEMBER, 1936.

JOSEPH V. TURNER, Hon. Treasurer.

We certify that we have examined the above Statement of Receipts and Disbursements of the Wild Life Preservation Society for the year ended the 30th June, 1936, with the books and vouchers of the Society and have found them to agree therewith. We have seen the Certificate from the Bank of New South Wales for the Australian Consolidated Treasury Bonds, face value £350, as above and for the balance at Bank.

HARRIE T. WOODS & WOODS, F's.C.A. (AUST.),
Honorary Auditors.

SAVE THE FOREST GIANTS
Preserve Them as National Monuments for all Time



A MAGNIFICENT EXAMPLE OF A QUEENSLAND GIANT SCRUB FIGTREE

Many such—hundreds of years old—have been burnt and cut out ruthlessly, with the advance of settlement. One such, in the Tweed River District of New South Wales, although standing about 60 feet distant from a telephone wire on a public road, was cut out by the Postmaster-General's Department "just in case" a limb should fall. It might have remained a marvel and a joy to the eye of the beholder for centuries to come.

Block by courtesy of "Australian Pastoralist," Brisbane.