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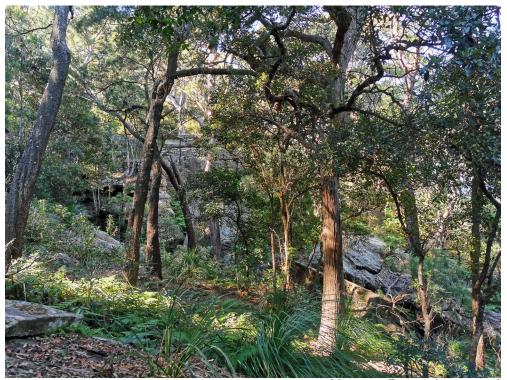


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A Bush Calendar

AMY MACK





Margaret Donald (cc by-sa 2.0) The bushland path that through the gully strays, And leads the wanderer into wonderland...

PREFACE

"A Bush Calendar" was commenced with the idea of sharing with other bush lovers the pleasures which I myself have found in my walks, and it appeared originally on the Page for Women of the "Sydney Morning Herald." As the seasons advanced letters of encouragement were received from many readers who "knew their Bush" and from some who admittedly had not found the key which unlocks the book of Nature; and it is at the request of many of these unknown friends that the articles are reprinted. Although the book is not intended to be a complete scientific record, the lists of flowers and birds most in prominence each month have been so greatly extended that they may claim to be fairly representative of the coastal districts around Sydney.

My thanks are due to the proprietors of the "Sydney Morning Herald" for permission to reprint, and to S. W. Bacon for his personal interest in the engraving of the illustrations.

A. E. M. Killara, 1909.



BLUE TONGUE

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WATTLE

August 1.

A ccording to the official calendar it is still winter, but out in the bush all the world knows it is spring. Although the week's heavy rain has drenched and spoiled the laden branches of the cultivated wattles—the golden-hued Cootamundra and the Queensland—their paler sisters in the neighbouring bush have survived the downpour, and are shedding their nutty sweetness through a damp world, and the air is fragrant with early spring scents.

This afternoon there was actually a break in the grey sky, and a wind that seemed as if it might blow the rain away. The house grows unsupportable after a whole seven days of rain, and I felt I must go out into the freshness and green. So with old hat, short skirt, and strong high boots I started off along the muddy road to see what the week's rain had brought forth. On the upper part of the ridge the soil is shale, and here grow tall blue gums and iron barks, with grassy spreads beneath them. In the autumn this grass is a great hunting

ground for mushrooms, but now as I trudged across the soppy sods there was nothing but green on every side. All green it was, but not all grass; for at the edge of the little creek, which was rushing along in muddy haste, I found a group of green orchids—those quaint delicate things with much-curved petals that look so like a strange bird's head. There were two sorts, one with a single flower on the end of a tall stalk, the other with several similar though much smaller blossoms on the slender stem. Close by, the faint pink of a different orchid glowed softly, all three together making a dainty bunch.

Last week the bed of the creek was quite dry, but now a perfect river rushes along, drowning beneath its torrent the bright green herring-bone ferns which make a glade of greenery all the year round. Last week, too, I watched a tomtit bringing food to his mate as she sat on her nest in a small turpentine overhanging the creek, and I spied on a pair of blackcaps as they carried fine twigs to the making of their cradle nest in the highest branch of a much taller turpentine. To-day, as I neared the group of dark-leaved trees, two tomtits flew past with much agitation, the little golden backs gleaming brightly, and I guessed that there was no longer need for the mother bird to sit; for as the tomtits are about the first birds of all to build, the babies would be hatched. The little family had survived the long wet week, and now the parents were taking advantage of the fine spell to catch some tasty insects for the wee things. But the blackcaps had been outdone by the weather, and a few solitary threads were all that remained of the cradle. Overhead, amongst



JJ Harrison (cc by-sa 4.0) DIAMOND-BIRDS. MALE (LEFT) AND FEMALE (RIGHT)

the topmost branches a number of the beautiful things darted, chattering and scolding, and probably looking out for likely spots to hang their nests. The blackcap is one of the prettiest of all th honey-eaters, with back of bright olive breast of snowy white, a rich, black head, white nape, and above his eye a patch of bright vermilion. He generally chooses the turpentine for his nesting tree, and hangs his little nest in the highest outermost bunch of leaves.

Last week when the creek was dry two diamond dicks were burrowing in the upper bank. There seemed little hope of their work remaining after all this rain, but it is always just as well to look, so I turned my steps towards the spot. To my surprise as I approached, the male bird, a pretty little chap with spotted



wings and head, darted out from the bank a foot or so above the stream. Fate had been kind, and the water had not reached the upper bank, where, at the end of the foot-long burrow, a little nest would soon hold a clutch of small white eggs.

The rain was still holding off, so I crossed the creek by a fallen tree, and almost immediately found myself on the sandstone country. Instantly the features of the bush were altered; the blue gums, ironbarks, and turpentines gave way to scribbly gums and banksias, beneath which grew in thick profusion all the prickly, spiky things which make real bush. Three kinds of wattle I found in a minute—the myrtleleafed, the sweet- scented, and the fine-leafed—and their drying flowers were full of sweetness. Growing

BORONIA LEDIFOLIA

AUGUST

beneath the shelter of the small banksias and other thick shrubs were clumps and clumps of the deep pink boronia in full bloom, the starry blossoms quite unspoiled by the rain; but the dillwynia, which should be painting the whole ground gold, bent, sad and pale, its drenched blossoms beneath the clinging raindrops; and faded, too, by the excessive rain were the red spider-flowers, usually so gay and bright in the later winter months.

A breath of nutty fragrance told of the presence of the little whitebeard, and I saw it sheltering beneath the thicker plants, the white of its open flower contrasting prettily with the soft red of its unopened bud. All through the bush the needlebush showed white blossoms amongst its spiky leaves, and in one tree I found a redhead's nest quite within reach. I approached it very gingerly—for the needlebush lives well up to its name— and after a few scratches, one right down my chin, I managed to put my hand on to the retort-shaped bundle, and tilting it gently, rolled out five eggs. Pure white they should have been; but they were so stained and discoloured that I knew at once they were addled, and the nest bore signs that the birds had been using it as a restingplace in the wet weather. Evidently it had been deserted by its rightful owners, and other birds had taken possession, using it as a storm shelter—a fate which often befalls the redhead's nest.

Amongst the banksias and tea-tree, white-cheeked and New Holland honeyeaters were noisily feeding and fussing. They are both rather showy members of the family, with black-and-white bodies, and yellow-edged wings, the only marked difference between them being the broad white fan-shaped tuft of the white-cheeked honeyeater, from which he gets his name. Both birds were evidently building, and in a little banksia I found the nest of the New Holland, with two tiny, hideous, featherless birds gaping widely for food. Further on in the heath close to the ground I found the nest of another honey-eater, known to science as the tawny-crowned. An insignificant little brown bird he is, but with a voice of liquid sweetness, which is to be heard on the heathlands most months of the year, floating with a gentle melancholy through the air.



Flying Freddy (cc by-sa 3.0) NEW HOLLAND HONEY-EATER

But the find of the afternoon was down by the creek at the bottom of the gully. There, amongst the thick scrubby bushes I heard the ringing call of the coachwhip bird; and almost immediately by merest accident, in pushing my way through the undergrowth, I stumbled across its nest of loosely joined

AUGUST

twigs, wherein lay two eggs of exquisite blue, boldly blotched with sepia spots. Rare, indeed, is it to find a coachwhip building so early in the year, and to come across a nest with a full set more than repaid me for my long wet walk. And when upon my homeward way I met the first butterfly of the season, a pretty, bright, brown thing, with black-veined wings, I felt that, despite the rain, which was once more beginning to creep up, spring was indeed on her way.

FLOWERS BLOOMING.

Buttercup

Ranunculus lappaceus Hibbertia billardieri Tetratheca ericifolia Zieria laevigata Boronia ledifolia Boronia poligalifolia Correa speciosa Ricinocarpus pinifolius Acacia juniperina Acacia suaveolens Acacia myrtifolia Acacia linearis Dillwynia ericifolia Bossiaea scolopendria Cryptandra amara Hovea linearis Hardenbergia monophylla Grevillea punicea

Native fuchsia Native jasmine Juniper-leafed wattle Sweet-scented wattle Myrtle-leafed wattle Fine-leafed wattle

False sarsaparilla Red spider-flowers

Hakea acicularis Banksia ericifolia Banksia marginata Olearia ramulosa Pimelea glauca Pimelea linifolia Astroloma humifusum Epacris longiflora Epacris microphylla Epacris pulchella Lysinema pungens Leucopogon microphyllus Leucopogon ericoides Pterostylis nutans Pterostylis reflexa Pterostylis longifolia

Needlebush Honeysuckles, or Bottlebrushes Snow bush Ground berry Native fuchsia White heath White beard

Green orchids

BIRDS ARRIVING IN AUGUST

Hirundo neoxena Cuculus pallidus Swallow Pallid cuckoo

BIRDS DEPARTING IN AUGUST.

Acanthochaera carunculata

Gill-bird (Wattled honeyeater)

BIRDS BREEDING IN AUGUST.

Corone australis Grallina picata Raven Peewee

AUGUST

Collyriocincla harmonica Eopsaltria australis Malurus superbus Malurus lamberti Origma rubricata Acanthiza pusilla Acanthiza lineata Acanthiza chrysorrhoa Acanthiza reguloides Psophodes crepitans Climacteris scandens Climacteris leucophoea Meliornis novae-hollandiae Meliornis sericea Glyciphila fulvifrons Ptilotis auricomis Ptilotis chrysops Melithreptus lunulatus Zosterops caerulescens Pardalotus punctatus Aegintha temporalis Anthus australis Menura superba Cacomantis flabelliformis Chalcococcyx plagosus Chalcococcyx basalis

Thrush Yellow robin Blue wren Chestnut-shouldered wren Rock-warbler Brown tit Striped tit Tomtit (Yellow-rumped tit) Bark tit (Buff-rumped tit) Whip-bird Tree-creeper White-throated tree-creeper New Holland honey-eater White-cheeked honey-eater Tawny-crowned honey-eater Yellow-tufted honey-eater Yellow-faced honey-eater Blackcap Silvereye Diamond-bird Redhead (Red-browed finch) Ground-lark (Pipit) Lyre-bird Fan-tailed cuckoo Bronze cuckoo Narrow-billed bronze cuckoo



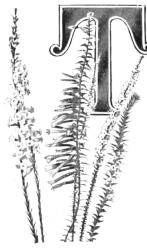


Holger Casselmann (cc by-sa 3.0) False sarsparilla blossom

GROOGLE (CC BY-SA 4.0)

FALSE SARSPARILLA

September 1



EPACRIS

o-day I found a treasure trove. On the slope of a gentle hill, beneath the shade of young turpentines and sassafras tree all starred amongst the soft green grass and maidenhair, stood dozens and dozens of the daintiest flowers imaginable, pale mauve and pure white orchids. Their pale faces, lifted skyward on the end of their slender stems, gleamed like stars amongst the short fronds of fern, till a soft wind crept past and set them fluttering like fettered butterflies. Ever fairylike blossom sang of spring, and the faint sweet scent which came from them was like an odour from a past September. Too lovely they were to touch, so I just sat and looked at them and dreamed long dreams—the dreams that

always stir and rise as sunny-haired September creeps into the year.



I was not the only dreamer in that beauty spot. A gentle movement in a tree close by caught my eye, and, turning, I saw a yellowbob seated upon her nest. Built on the top of a broken branch, and ornamented with hanging strips of bark, it looked so like part of the tree that, but for the slight movement of her tail. I should never have spied the little mother cuddling down upon her nest. She knew at once I had seen her, and her big bright eye watched me suspiciously, but not another movement did she make until I came quite close to her, then hurriedly she flew off with a little frightened "tchew-tchew." I peeped over the edge of the nest, and saw two apple-green eggs, all spotted with red. No wonder the

 $_{\rm JOSEPH\ C\ BOONE\ (CC\ BY-SA\ 4.0)}$ little bird was dreaming so happily, eastern spinebill

and no wonder she flew away in such dread at my approach. But she had no need for fear; I would not touch her pretty treasures, and, knowing that she would not return while I was near, I calmed her feelings by going on my way.

Such a sweet and flower-decked way it was, too. All amongst the undergrowth grew the bright yellow pea-flowers of the platylobium, with its pretty sarsaparilla-like leaves, myriads of bees droning amongst the blossoms; where the trees were fewer, "snow bushes" grew white, their slender branches massed with myriads of dainty white daisy flowers. On the grass beside them the yellow orchids, which children here call cowslips, showed in the clearings, while among the tangles of turpentines and gum-suckers two or three different wattles and a white-beard wafted sweetness abroad.

There were other sweets amongst those same small turpentines. In one, quite close to the ground, I found the nest of a white-cheeked honey-eater; a cosy little home it was, carefully made of fibres, and lined warmly with the soft brown velvet of the banksias. Resting on the rich lining were two exquisite eggs of a delicate pinky cream, with a zone of red spots—a marking characteristic of honey-eaters' eggs. Quite close, in another turpentine, I found a similar nest, but this time in place of the eggs were two bare tiny chicks. As soon as I drew near the mother bird came up scolding and chattering furiously, with her fine white tufts puffed out in fear and anger. Evidently she was not able to recognise a friend, so I moved away, and from a little distance watched her fly down to the infants with a tender, anxious cry. Suddenly above her voice came a sharp bird note, the voice of the spine-billed honey-eater. "Quick, quick, be quick," he called as he flew past, his gun-blue back shining in the sun. "Quick, quick, hurry up, hurry up, quick, quick, quick," called his mate, and she too darted past with loud wing-beat. I followed through the bushes, and after watching their movements for a while saw one fly up with a fibre in his long sharp beak. I crept nearer, and there, in the highest branch of a turpentine sapling, hung an almost finished cradle. It was well out of my reach, so I did not attempt to see closer.

But very soon I came across a nest into which I could easily see. Through the bushes came a faint, sibilant note, which I recognised at once as that of the chestnut-shouldered wren, a rarer cousin of our garden friend, the blue wren. Very still I stood, and waited patiently, gazing in the direction of the cry. Nearer and nearer it came, and suddenly only a few yards in front of me there hopped out a tiny brown mouse-like bird, with a long blue tail held very erect. It was the female, and in her beak she carried a long thread of grass. With hops and jerks she came through the bushes, and then with a flutter made towards a clump of grass almost within my reach, but hidden from sight by a thick sapling. Just for a second she stayed then was off, but without the thread. I peeped round the sapling, and there, almost on the ground, was her little bulky nest of grass, with its side entrance carefully hidden by the protecting grasses. The nest was almost finished and ready for eggs. The common blue wrens have been a little quicker with their building, for last week I found their nest with two eggs, half the full set.



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BLUE FAIRY WREN

A sharp "twit-twit" sounded in my ear, and I turned quickly in time to see a small greenish-brown bird flash past. It was the little brown tit, and in his beak he carried a small morsel of food. I followed him quietly and watched him dart for a moment into a small bush and then out again, and away. I stepped up to the spot and there came across one of the tragedies of the bush. In amongst the branches was set a small oval nest, with a doorway at the side, and at this doorway was a sad little sight, of which I had often heard but had never seen with my own eyes. Hanging by its slender claws to the grass threads of the nest, lay the dead body of a tiny baby tit, while on the ground below

lay another small body. Inside the nest, where the two baby tits should have, been safely hidden, was huddled a bulky young fantail cuckoo, who opened his wide yellow bill, and peeked hungrily at me. He was not sorry for the poor infants he had tumbled out to their death; all he cared for was to get enough to eat, and he squawked and squawked, while the two small foster parents worked their hardest to satisfy his voracious appetite.

But fascinating as the forest country was, I knew that a wealth of beauty was awaiting me; so I pushed on down the hill, across the creek, and up on to the sandstone. As I passed the creek a diamond bird flew by to a hole in the bank, and by the cheeping and squeaking that came from within I knew there were three or four baby birds in the cosy nest at the end of the tunnel. I did not linger long near this little strange home, for the blaze of colour ahead lured me on. Surely there was never anything more beautiful than that stretch of bush which but a few weeks before had been bare and unlovely. Now it shone and shimmered with a wealth of flowers of every colour and shape. Spring had flung her gold with a prodigal hand, and the yellow pea-flowers of the dillwynia, the pultenaea and the aotus gleamed like tiny fairy sovereigns, while lower down on the sand the gold and rich brown flowers of the bossiaea shone on their quaint, flat, leafless stems. Pale in comparison to the gorgeous pea blossoms were the lemon-yellow flower spikes of the lemonscented phebalium, which grew near the creek, and even the golden balls of the juniper-leafed wattle paled before their brilliancy. But here was another flower



Toby Hudson (CC by-sa 3.0)

NATIVE FUSHSIA

which vied with them in gorgeousness; it was the deep pink boronia, which spread like a flowing carpet on every hand. A week ago it was at its height of glory; now, it is just on its wane, though still full of beauty. But in a few more weeks it will make way for its paler sister, the one which is sold in the streets. Amongst the boronia, the lysinema lifted tall, sweet, white spikes, and three other epacrids lent softness to the colour scheme, while close by a regular mass of white-beards in full bloom shed an intoxicating sweetness and fascinated hundreds of bees to their midst. Another sweet-scented flower I found was logania, a shrub with small creamy bell flowers, growing near the creek.

Then up on the heathlands I came across a host of sprengelia, one of the epacris family, whose thick, pink heads of star-blossoms stand straight up amongst the brown grass or green bead fern. It is always found in the heath, especially in the swampy parts, and is very plentiful near Long Bay and Maroubra. Up on those same highlands last week I found the first native rose (*boronia serrulata*), and also the first hibbertia—a golden blossom very



BORONIA SERRULATA

like a small dog-rose. There, too, I found an eriostemon in flower, with its pale pink starry blossoms gleaming like tiny camellias against its silvery stems and long leaves. This flower is one of our best spring bloomers, and with its sister, the box-leafed eriostemon, is very plentiful along the coast.

There is one flower which it is not necessary to go further than the train window to see, and that is the hardenbergia. Just at present it is wrapping all the cuttings in its regal coat of purple; it streams over the red clay, creeps through the green grass, clambers over old logs and fences, and even climbs into the branches of small trees. Sometimes it is accompanied by its less conspicuous friend, the tecoma, that creeper with creamy red-spotted bells, which make soft masses of bloom over fences and tree trunks. The white wax stars of the

wild clematis also shine out of the grass of the railway embankments, or fes toon with bridal wreaths the tree trunks in the brush.

It is, indeed, a time of sweetness in sight and scent and sound. The air is everywhere fragrant with per fume, the eyes are gladdened on every side by gorgeous blossoms, and as for the sounds—the world is full of them. It is quite impossible to sleep these mornings, for at daybreak begins the bird chorus, led always by the Jacky Winter, whose "peter, peter, peter," is the first bird note to greet the morn. Even through the night the birds are not silent. Last night I heard two cuckoos calling all through the hours of darkness; the wail of the bronze cuckoo was answered again and again by the rollicking note of the pallid cuckoo, the one of his family who seems least oppressed by his fate. Now is the time of all times for one to peep into the mysteries of the bush, and those who have not yet read from the magic pages of Nature's book will find no better season for opening the cover than sweet September.

FLOWERS BLOOMING.

Clematis glycinoides Hibbertia billardieri Tetratheca ericifolia Zieria laevigata Zieria pilosa Zieria smithi Boronia ledifolia Boronia pinnata

Boronia floribunda Boronia serrulata Correa alba Correa speciosa Philotheca australis Phebalium dentatum Phebalium squamulosum Eriostemon buxifolius Eriostemon lanceolatus Ricinocarpus pinifolius Acacia baileyana Acacia decurrens Acacia juniperina Acacia juniperina (var. Browni) Acacia longifolia Acacia floribunda Acacia myrtifolia Acacia stricta Pultenaea stipularis Pultenaea daphnoides Phyllota phyllicoides Dillwynia ericifolia Dillwynia floribunda Dillwynia juniperina Platylobium formosum Bossiaea scolopendria Daviesia genistifolia Aotus villosa Hovea linearis

Native rose Native fuchsia Native jasmine Cootamundra silver wattle Green wattle Juniper-leafed wattle Sydney golden wattle Myrtle-leafed wattle Yellow pea-flowers

20

Indigofera australis Hardenbergia monophylla Leptospermum laevigatum Leptospermum scoparium Cryptandra amara Petrophila pulchella Isopogon anethifolius Telopea speciosissima Conospermum ericifolium Grevillea punicea Grevillea buxifolia Grevillea linearis Grevillea sericea Grevillea mucronulata Hakea pugioniformis Hakea acicularis Banksia ericifolia Banksia marginata Olearia ramulosa Logania floribunda Mitrasacme polymorpha Pimelea glauca Pimelea linifolia Tecoma australis Brachyloma daphnoides Astroloma humifusum Epacris longiflora Epacris obtusifolia Epacris microphylla

Native indigo Falso sarsaparilla Tea-trees Tea-trees

Drum stick Waratah

Red spider-flower Grey spider-flower White spider-flower Pink spider-flower Green spider-flower Needlebush Needlebush Bottlebrushes or Honeysuckle Bottlebrushes or Honeysuckle Snow-bush

Ground-berries Native fuchsia

Epacris pulchella Lysinema pungens Sprengelia incarnata Leucopogon amplexicaulis Leucopogon lanceolatus Leucopogon Richei Leucopogon ericoides Styphelia longifolia Styphelia tubiflora Styphelia triflora Diuris maculata Caladenia alba Glossodia major Glossodia minor Thelymitra ixiodies Pterostylis reflexa Dendrobium speciosum

White heath

White beard White beard White beard Green five-corners Red five-corners Cream and pink five-corners Yellow orchid White orchid Mauve orchid Mauve orchid Wild Ixia Green orchid Rock lily

BIRDS ARRIVING IN SEPTEMBER.

Lalage tricolor Gerygone albigularis Pachycephala rufiventris Myzomela sanguinolenta Halcyon sanctus White-shouldered caterpillar-eater Native canary (White-throated fly-eater) Rufous-breasted thickhead Blood-bird Kingfisher

BIRDS BREEDING IN SEPTEMBER.

Corone australis Grallina picata Raven Peewee

Collyriocincla harmonica Lalage tricolor Rhipidura albiscapa Rhipidura tricolor Sisura inquieta Microeca fascinans Gerygone albigularis Eopsaltria australis Malurus superbus Malurus lamberti Origma rubricata Cisticola exilis Acanthiza pusilla Acanthiza nana Acanthiza lineata Acanthiza chrysorrhoa Acanthiza reguloides Psophodes crepitans Ephthianura albifrons Cracticus destructor Pachycephala gutturalis Pachycephala rufiventris Falcunculus frontatus Climacteris scandens Climacteris leucophoea Sittella chrysoptera Meliornis novae-hollandiae Meliornis sericea Glyciphila fulvifrons

Thrush White-shouldered caterpillar-eater Fantail Wagtail Razor-grinder (Restless flycatcher) Jacky Winter (Brown flycatcher) Native canary Yellow robin Blue wren Chestnut-shouldered wren Rock-warbler Grass-warbler Brown tit Yellow-bellied tit Striped tit Tomtit Bark-tit Whip-bird White-fronted chat Butcher bird Yellow-breasted thickhead Rufous-breasted thickhead Shrike-tit Tree-creeper White-throated tree-creeper Tree-runner New Holland honey-eater White-cheeked honey-eater Tawny-crowned honey-eater

Ptilotis auricomis Ptilotis chrysops Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris Myzomela sanguinolenta Melithreptus lunulatus Zosterops caerulescens Pardalotus punctatus Hirundo neoxena Artamus sordidus Aegintha temporalis Anthus australis Podargus strigoides Dacelo gigas Cuculus pallidus Cacomantis flabelliformis Chalcococcyx plagosus Chalcococcyx basalis Turnix varia

Yellow-tufted honey-eater Yellow-faced honey-eater Spine-billed honey-eater Blood-bird Blackcap Silvereye Diamond-bird Swallow Wood-swallow Redhead Ground-lark Morepork (Frogmouth) Jackass Pallid cuckoo Fan-tailed cuckoo Bronze cuckoo Narrow-billed bronze cuckoo Painted quail



Benjamint444 (cc by-sa 3.0) Morepork



JJ Harrison (cc by-sa 4.0) JACKASS