

T F N. C.

Easter Camp Report

1960.

Rheban

(This report was never completed
and published. - This
draft was prepared by L. E. WALL)

GENERAL ACCOUNT.

Rheban was again chosen as the site for Easter Camp this year, following our successful visit a year ago. The weather on this occasion was not so kind to us, but it is a tribute to the Club that its camps are always very enjoyable whatever the weather may be. For a brief description of the area reference may be made to the review of the 1959 camp.

The Camp Committee, with Mr. H.F. Sargison and Mr. A.B. Brownell directing operations, and a small number of willing helpers had everything in readiness for the campers who arrived on Thursday evening to find supper ready and bedding laid out wherever possible. It was unfortunate that strong winds developed that night, after a week of beautiful autumn weather, but the advance party had done its work well and there were no mishaps.

Good Friday morning saw the arrival of several more car-loads of campers, while many members took advantage of the opportunity either to renew memories of last year's camp, or, for new campers, to explore areas close to the campsite. By lunch-time the full complement of 81 was in camp. It was interesting to note that half of that number had not attended the camp last year.

The first organised outing occupied that afternoon, when we crossed the marsh to the edge of the Sandspit River and then followed the river to its mouth. The high wind made bird observations difficult, but there was always something of interest. The return to camp by way of the beach was most unpleasant, as the wind incessantly swept sand into our faces, and many retreated behind the sand-dunes to seek shelter in the bush.

Last year most of the campers enjoyed a trip

Chinaman's Bay area of Maria Island in a fishing boat, so tentative arrangements were made for a similar trip to Darlington, on the northern end of the island this year, and the day set apart for this was Saturday. However, the continued windy weather put an end to this plan so as an alternative we went by car to Seaford, about 30 miles north of Rheban, on the southern side of the entrance to Little Swanport. Conditions there were also most unpleasant, though the day was sunny, but lunch was taken on the sheltered seashore before a visit was made to the extensive aboriginal midden about a mile within the inlet. So great is the accumulation of oyster- and other shells left by the natives that for many years a lime kiln operated there. Many stone implements were picked up by the party.

After leaving Seaford some members visited Hamphampton, which is reached by a branch road from Seaford, where good views of the northern end of Maria Is. were obtained. Others investigated the old life of Little Swanport. On Saturday night the camp was struck by a violent storm, but without serious effect.

As is our custom a short Church Service was held on Easter morning before we made a short excursion along the road towards Wielangta, the old saw-milling district near the source of the Sandspit River. At the river crossing we turned north across the paddocks and made our way homeward along the edge of the wooded hill behind the camp. The effectiveness of the poison 1080 was clearly seen here, with many kangaroos and brush possums the victims.

We were invited to visit "Earlham", the old homestead south of the Sandspit River, during the afternoon, but heavy squalls of rain after lunch prevented that, and three cars only made the trip so that their occupants might see the old barn and the hand-made woolpress which are highlights of the

property.

On Monday morning we travelled by car to Wielangta about five miles inland where we were able to explore briefly the heavy-rainfall forest which is such a contrast to the light bush closer to the coast. The time at our disposal was much too limited to make adequate observations of the natural history of the area before we returned to camp for lunch.

The first task after lunch was the grouping of all in camp for the official photograph (and many others). The remainder of the afternoon was free time in which members were able to roam at will or make preparations for the concert at night. A number even enjoyed swimming from the beach.

Our evenings in camp, with the exception of the last night, were spent in the hayloft of the barn where many forms of entertainment were provided, and we were most grateful to those who contributed in any way. Opportunity was taken, also, to provide short talks on natural history observations. On the last night in camp the big marquee was transformed into a concert hall, and a big programme of items, natural and otherwise, was put on. Our thanks are due to the many campers who helped to make it a grand finale. We were glad to have with us as guests Mr & Mrs. Ibbott, of "Rheban", and the Misses Chesterman, of "Earl"

Tuesday morning saw an early start made on dismantling the camp, and very good progress was made despite a light shower of rain soon after breakfast. As soon as the lorry arrived we were able to commence loading, and all the work was virtually completed by 2 p.m. when the passenger bus left for home.

It is very difficult to single out individuals for a special word of thanks for their help in

making the Easter Camp of 1960 the success which has come to be expected of the Club. We must say "Thank you" to each member of the camp, for each contributes his or her share to the success, but some must receive special mention. Firstly, there are Mr. Sargison and Mr. Brownell without whose untiring work we couldn't even begin. Secondly, we couldn't be without our good friend, Andre Touchet, and his wife and son, who all worked extremely long hours to provide the needs of the "inner man". Others which must receive special mention are Mr. Sharland and Mrs. Fleming, both of whom have given wonderful help over many years.

Those who attended the camp were :-

Messrs. H.K. Aves, D. Branagan, A.B. Brownell, G. Brownell, H. Crocker, J. Fergusson, D. Guilbert, A.M. Hewer, J. Hewitt, M. Hurburgh, F. King, N. King, R. King, J. Lewis, J. Lucas, E.C. Metcalf, R. Morrisby, Dr. A.G. Nicholls, Messrs. R. Nicholls, H.F. Sargison, M.S.R. Sharland, F. Tayler, L.E. Wall, A. Way, R. Way, P. Webster; Mesdames Branagan, E. Fleming, J. Hewitt, M. Hurburgh, J. Lucas, E.C. Metcalf, A.G. Nicholls, R. Parrish, L. Roberts, F. Tayler, L.E. Wall; Misses E. Aves, G. Aves, M. Branagan, J. Cripps, M. Dooley, R. Forsyth, J. King, J. Lazenby, J. Lucas, R. Marshall, A. Metcalf, R. Metcalf, P. Miley, E. Morrisby, A. Parrish, P. Parrish, P. Payne, D. Robbie, E. Roberts, F. Roberts, J. Roberts, E. Ross, K. Sargison, M. Symons, P. Tayler, B. Wall, C. Wall, J. Waters, P. Waters, R. Waters, M. Westbrook, P. Willmott; Masters P. Fergusson, D. Hewer, R. Lucas, P. McCormack, D. Milledge, L. Morrisby, M. Risby, W. Risby, C. Roberts, T. Tayler, P. Wall, R. Wall.

BIRD NOTES.

The various habitats in the Rheban district, and the birds likely to be found in them were discussed in the Report of the 1959 Camp, to which reference should be made for a full description. These notes will include reference to birds seen this year only, and to marked contrasts between the observations made in the Easter holidays of the two years.

Along the beach this year were many dead Short-tailed Shearwaters (Muttonbirds), for which it is difficult to account. The past summer has been very dry and free from storms to which these birds might have fallen victim, and to see so many carcasses washed up was surprising, particularly as none were found last year.

Amongst the bush birds to be added to last year's list are the Black-cheeked Falcon, Brush Wattlebird, Golden Whistler, Brown Quail, Tasmanian Thornbill, and the New Holland or Yellow-winged Honeyeater. The last-named was found on Maria Island in 1959 but not on the mainland. In the open country we increased the list with the Wedge-tailed Eagle and the introduced Skylark.

The gale-force winds experienced on the visit to Seaford restricted our opportunities of compiling a worthwhile list for that district, but one item is worthy of mention. At the head of Little Swanport two Little Egrets were under close scrutiny for some time. (This species was first recorded in Tasmania at Blackman Bay in May 1957, and in the same year it was seen at Little Swanport). Just before we left a Large White Egret settled close to the others, and the difference in size was most conspicuous.

As was expected, with Easter falling three weeks later than last year, there was a much reduced number of migratory birds to be seen. One or two

sky Wood-Swallows and Tree Martins, as well as a number of Little Stints at the Sandspit River mouth, but there was a complete absence of Swallows, the various cuckoos, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes and Swamp Wrens. Musk and Swift Parrots were in very much smaller numbers than in 1959.

One of the spectacular sights of this year's camp was the diving of Gannets. Both on Friday and Sunday afternoons large numbers of these birds were fishing close inshore, and on the latter occasion the display was particularly good. At one time five were seen to dive in quick succession within a radius of about ten feet, and the last had plunged below the surface before the first had re-appeared. It is seldom that such a concentration of these birds is seen.

The number of species now listed for the Rheban district is 77.

MAMMAL NOTES.

Earlier in this Review mention has been made of the results of 1080 poisoning on the edge of the bush country which forms the northern boundary of the river flats. It was obvious that both Brush Wallaby and Brush Possum are very common in the district. One of the first-mentioned was very large and considered by many members of the party to be an immature Forester Kangaroo. Unfortunately decomposition was well advanced and it was not possible to determine whether it had a furry nose, one of the diagnostic characters of the Forester. The measurement of the hind foot (including the claw) was 257 mm., but this proved to be within the known range of the Brush Wallaby.

The present known range of the Forester Kangaroo does not extend so far south as Rheban, but the species is known to occur in the Lake Tooms area which is not many miles to the northwest.