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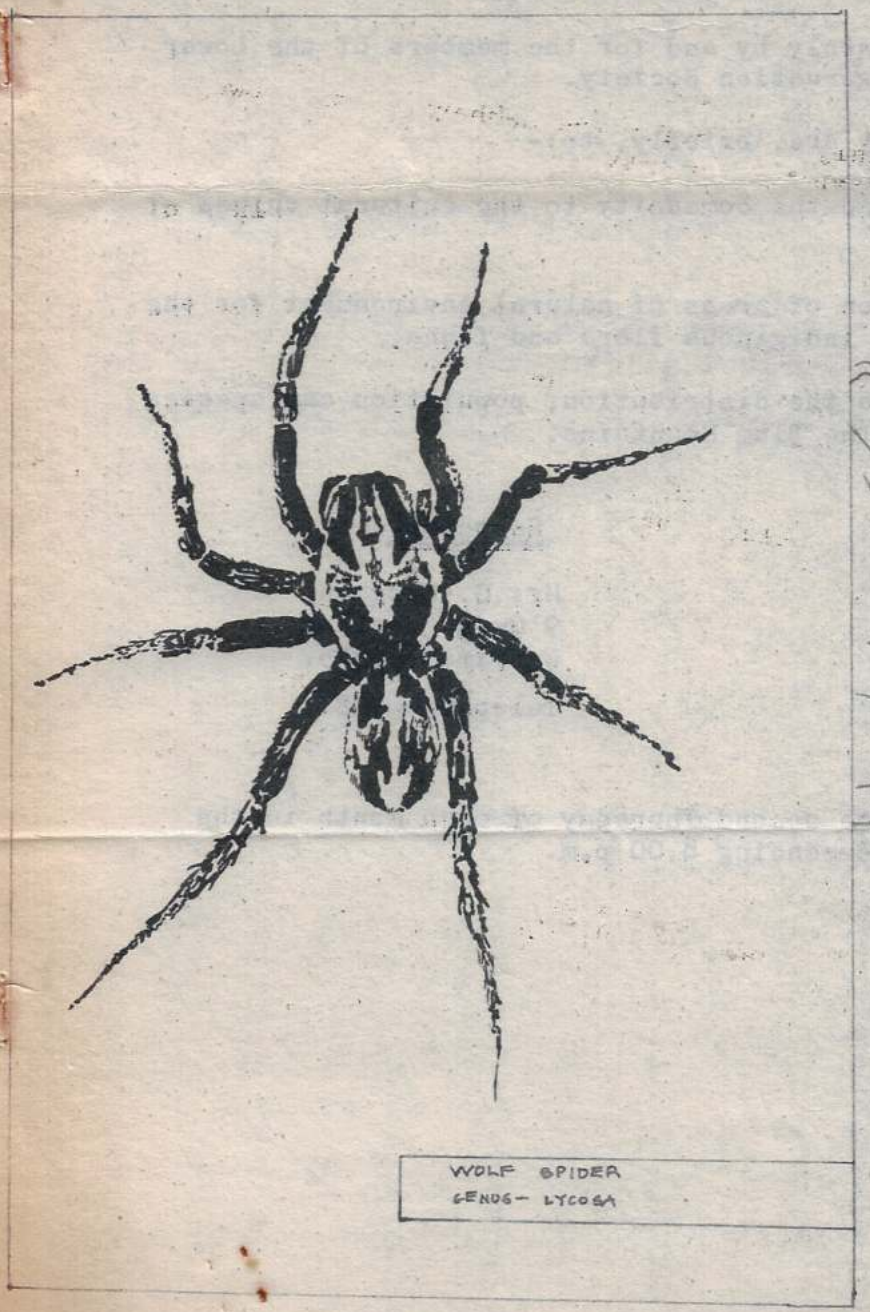
KALORI

Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife Conservation Society



WOLF SPIDER
GENUS - LYCOSA

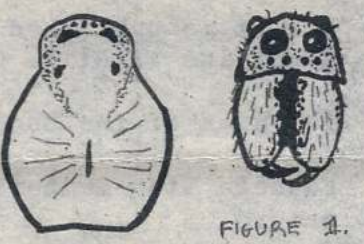


FIGURE 1.

HUNTING IN GRASS

FIGURE 2.

CONSERVE, PRESERVE, INVESTIGATE, EDUCATE

Kalori is published monthly by and for the members of the Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife Conservation Society.

The aims of the Society are, briefly, to:-

1. Educate the members and the community to the cultural values of nature.

2. Work for the reservation of areas of natural environment for the refuge and breeding of indigenous flora and fauna.

3. Carry out research into the distribution, population and species of flora and fauna in the Blue Mountains.

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Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month in the Springwood Fire Station, commencing 8.00 p.m.

THE WOLF SPIDER.

Phylum:- Arthropoda
Class :- Arachnida
Family:- Lycosidae
Genus :- Lycosa

These are probably among the commonest and most widely distributed of all spider families. If you look carefully among grass, or under leaf litter you will soon find a brown or grey, swift-running, furry spider, perhaps carrying her egg-sacs behind her abdomen, attached by silk threads to the spinnerets. This is a Wolf Spider. Another well known species is the large, grey, Garden Wolf Spider, which lives in a burrow without a lid in lawns and gardens. Some Wolf spiders live in the open on beaches, or river flats, and may run out on the water to catch their prey.

The body colour is usually shades of grey and brown, rather dull to our eyes, but well adapted to conceal the spider in its natural habitat. There is often more pattern, in the form of bands of light and dark shades on the prosoma* than on the abdomen. The male Wolf spider courts the female by waving his palps* and front legs in a definite manner, almost as if he was sending a love message by semiphore. The female drags her globular egg sac behind her, attached losely to the tip of her abdomen, Fig. 2. When the spiderlings hatch they ride for a time on the mother's body clinging to the hairs.

Lycosa is recognised by the eyes, which have the pattern shown in Fig. 1. The front of the prosoma is high, and almost vertical. Many of these are large spiders, with strong legs and keen eyesight but they are not dangerous to man.

*prosoma - is sometimes clearly divided into two regions. At the front is the head region, which bears the eyes above, and the fang and mouth parts beneath; the rest of the prosoma is the thoracic region, to which the legs are attached, underneath.

*palps - projecting forward in front of the body, sometimes tapping the ground regularly. The palps probably have sense organs in them, and may detect scent or sound. The palps of the male spiders are swollen at the ends and look as if the spider is wearing boxing gloves. By a glance at the ends of the palps it is often possible to tell quickly whether a spider is male or female. The spider uses the palps for placing the sperm within the female during mating.

Book Ref.: Australian Spiders
- John Child.

THE ORCHIDS OF MURRAY PARK

Isobel Bowden.

It is now over ten years since I first settled in Wentworth Falls. A great attraction to me was the proximity of the Reserves, and a small park opposite my home in Langford Road. This area of two or three acres was fenced with a neat white fence, had oak trees planted along the "foot path" which was uncleared, and two groups of pines.

Soon after I moved into the house the fence disappeared, and shortly afterwards the centre of the Park was cleared round a cricket pitch.

This Park was a gift of Captain Murray, a trustee of the local Reserves, and a keen nature lover. He built several cottages in the locality and was the first to descend into the Valley of Waters, which he managed with the use of a rope.

Over the years Murray Park has proved of great interest.

The native trees are usual sandstone species of the area - E. piperita, E. Seiberi and E. globoidea, the black oak Casuerina littoralis, Acacia elata and Banksia serrata, I think complete the list.

The ground slopes gently and on the Falls Road side was quite a boggy patch until two years ago, marshy types and heath flora surround this patch, although the wet loving species are vanishing.

Last year following the tritting of Central Park, a natural area close by, I decided to try to make an inventory of the Murray Park Flora before it met a similar fate, unfortunately, I was rather late, but the number of plants present in the area was a surprise even to me. Nearly 150 species have been identified, not including grasses and similar types.

The orchids have been a source of special interest and the species noted number thirty-four;

Ground Orchids have tuberous, or rhizome roots, which enable them to appear almost at once on fire burnt or cleared areas, and of course in these conditions they are not hard to see. The roads round Blaxland were once a veritable orchid garden, but they do disappear as the land grows more sterile.

In the early spring about the first orchid to appear is the long leaf greenhood, Pterostylis longifolia, some buds of which are now showing. Greenhoods have either one large flower at the top of the stalk or a group of smaller flowers both the species found in the park have small flowers, the other being the autumn species Pt. parviflora. Greenhoods are believed to have had their origin on a great southern Continent.

Caladenia carnea appears fairly early and is accompanied by the delightful little Caladenia iridescens. Caladenia are believed to be endemic in Australia and following is the list of other orchids which appear during spring, summer and autumn.

The "beardies" are Calochilus, campestris, paludosus, robertsonii and gracillimus - the latter close to robertsonii but flowering later and always very slender, with neat small flowers bearded to the tip of the tongue.

The sun orchids Thelymitra, have in the past revelled in the clear open area in the centre and towards the marshy area of the reserve. The following have been recorded, ixioides, and variety merinae, truncata, media, pauciflora, carnea and longifolia.

At the same time the first two Prasophyllums appear, P. elatum and P. brevilabre. These are followed by P. flavum, used as food by the natives, as it has a large rhizome, then through the summer appear a crowd of tiny orchids whose existence has depended on their minute size. They are so lovely that if they were twenty times larger they would have all been collected long ago. These tiny flowers look like grass. Only the microscope reveals the perfect flowers complete with frills, glands, hairs and a range of colour to equal the cymbidiums. P. morrisii, P. archeri, P. densum, P. ansatum, all appear in the Park.

Finally in late autumn P. striatum appears - a signal that the others will not be seen for twelve months.

Of the yellow double tails only Diuris sulphurea has been seen, this is one of the prettiest Diuris, and uses sexual attraction to achieve pollination. Summer brings the queer looking parrot orchid, Orthoceras stricta, and the Duck orchid, Caleana major. The Duck Orchid has the power of movement, and traps its insect visitors to ensure pollination, and then lets go again. I am sure George Caley was pleased to have this quaint little flower named for him. Two species of Cryptostylis occur, C. Leptochila, and C. subulata. These flowers also use sexual attraction as a lure, and are pollinated by wasps. The Hyacinth orchid, Dipodium punctatum, and the potato orchid, Gastrodia sessamoides have also been located and their flowers may be seen through summer and autumn months.

The tiny green flowers of Microtis appear in summer and spring. They are by no means as attractive as the "Prassies" under the microscope. M. parviflora and M. oblonga occur in the Park. In America there is a bewildering number of species of Spiranthes with their twisted spiral of little flowers Only one Species grows in Australia, S. lancea. On the Blue Mountains it is most often seen in damp places by the road sides, or on the verge of swamps, it has appeared at times along Falls road. The flowers are pink with a crisp shining white tongue. It is entertaining to collect a few of these plants and observe the nature of the "twist" - sometimes clockwise and sometimes reverse, at other times slightly mixed! All orchid flowers, as the bud develops, twist round so that the tongue - lip, or labellum - as you wish - which is really the top petal of the flower, is at the bottom - Every orchid bud does this

twist, thus many of these very modified petals, or lips, become a landing stage for visiting insects. In some species, however, the position of the lip has ceased to suit the need of the plant so instead of turning back again, they go on turning through 360° until the lip is at the top again. Spiranthes, not being satisfied to twist the flowers, twists the stem as well. I wonder why? I found one completely turned round a blade of grass, like a cork screw.

During the late autumn few orchids are seen on the reserve. The little insect orchids Acianthus exsertus, and the Autumn bird, Chiloglottis reflexa, can be found by looking for the colonies of leaves, and finally come the "parsons bands "Eriochilus Cucullatus. These flowers have two conspicuous segments - like caladenias with only two petals - and these are thought to resemble the bands of a Scottish parson. However to end on a more frivolous note they have been likened to "dancing sailors". Beauty they say is in the eye of the beholder - and so are these imagined likenesses of flowers to various objects. What a crowd of quaint and interesting little flowers nodding, and, yes, perhaps dancing at my door. It seems sad that their days among us are so limited.

Elizabeth Gould

"'Mother' of Australian bird study."

Following the notes on the Gould League, readers may be interested in some notes on John Gould's wonderful wife Elizabeth.

Leaving three young children in the care of her mother in England she came to Australia with her husband and eldest son aged seven, in 1838, so that she might assist her husband in his bird studies through her talent as an artist .

There were no cameras in those days. Human eyes and brains recorded the facts of the world.

So with courage and devotion Elizabeth parted from her tiny children and set out for a land of "Convicts".

During a visit to Sydney, Elizabeth said it was expensive to live "until you get cunning" but most of her time was spent with the Governor and Lady Franklin in Hobart. There she won the friendship of both, and there her fifth child was born. "Several ladies have lately thought proper to increase their families, but ..... none ..... can compare with mine". So wrote the proud mother to her family in England.

Elizabeth made over 600 drawings and paintings of Australian birds and flowers. Indeed it is these beautiful illustrations which have made Gould's Scientific studies available for the enjoyment and enlightenment of many. Without them these works must have remained of purely Scientific interest.

After an absence of two years, Mrs. Gould was restored for a short time to her little family in England, but she died at the early age of 37 years, worn out with the great effort of her work and the care of her large family. During one of Goulds long absences on an excursion Elizabeth wrote - "At the end of it all I sigh and think if I could but see dear old England, and what it contains, I would contentedly sit down at my working table and stroke, stroke, away to the end of the chapter - that is Health permitting."

However, Elizabeth was by no means a recluse absorbed in her work, though admittedly shy. In lighter vein she wrote from Government House - "We shall be very gay in honour of the Queen's birthday which will be celebrated by a grand ball. Imagine me - frisking about amidst 200 people -- dancing - no, no, I am well content to look on."

John Gould will always be regarded as one of Australia's leading Naturalist adventurers, but his Scientific gift to our country is illuminated by the painstaking artistry of his devoted wife.

"The life of Elizabeth Gould .
A.H. Chisholm.

I. Bowden.