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# KALORI

May 1969



Conservation Society

Lower Blue Mountains

Wildlife

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.

Bulletin No. 25

May 1969

Nothing of particular importance took place at the last meeting. Those present had the almost unique opportunity to view a tiger cat at close range - nobody appeared anxious to feel it though. Mr. and Mrs. Smithard of North Springwood caught it in a rabbit trap after failing to persuade it with a stick to cease looting their henhouse. The cat was fairly old, but still lively, and was released by Mr. King in the Park. We have now had reports of native cats from North Springwood, Blaxland and Faulconbridge.

On Saturday the twelfth, a party pegged out three  $\frac{1}{2}$  metre square quadrats near Campfire Creek in the Park south of Glenbrook. The idea is to keep a record of plant growth in these samples of that sort of environment, which was burnt last December. We may make important discoveries and we may not. Nobody knows what we might find because nobody has done this kind of research.

Next meeting 8th May.

### INFORMATION REQUESTED

Propagation of native plants.

A personal ambition is to have, in the near future, a native garden, on a small plot with northerly aspect at Springwood. My knowledge is limited, so I am seeking hints from others with like interest and more experience.

Information to date is regarding softer shrubs - boronias, proslantheras, etc.

These may be grown from cutting by taking a young shoot, cut cleanly and planted in a small tin. A beer can or jam tin may be used, filled with black sand and leaf mould.

With cutting planted, the tin and contents must be thoroughly soaked, then a plastic bag covered over all, placed on partly shaded ground and left till growth appears. Tin is then soaked again to allow easy removal without disturbance of earth.

A site is prepared by digging a large hole and filling with soil similar to that in native habitat of the plant, and cutting set in same. Any watering done later, only if weather very dry, is done by prodding holes deep into earth some distance from roots and water allowed to seep slowly into these. I have seen excellent results from this method. I have also seen a christmas bush grown from a length of stout branch planted direct into native soil: though this shrub also grows well from seed.

I would be very interested to hear of anyone who knows whether waratahs can be grown in any way from cutting. Results from seed planting are possible but slow: and very few seeds germinate, while fewer still survive afterwards.

I have planted seeds of wonga vine but had none germinate.

Can any Kalori readers offer help, please?

"LEARNER"

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## THE COMMON MARSUPIAL MOUSE

*Sminthopsis murina murina.*

Thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Turner of Cranebrook, we have two very good specimens of this species, a male and a female. Unfortunately they were killed by a cat after apparently seeking refuge in the Turners' bushhouse after the November fires.

This species is particularly mouse-like, and is probably often mistaken for the common, introduced mouse. However, as with the previously mentioned Yellow-footed Marsupial Mouse, it can be distinguished by the teeth and shape of the head, and of course in the case of the female by the presence of a pouch. In this specimen the pouch is not complete, being merely a flap of skin surrounding the teats. However, the pouch probably becomes more enclosed during the breeding season, as it has to house up to ten young. After leaving the pouch the young obtain transport by clinging to the mother's sides.

Their very narrow hindfeet indicate a more terrestrial habit than the climbing Yellow-footed Marsupial Mouse, and Mrs. Turner states that they moved with a distinct hopping gait.

Said by Marlow "Marsupials of Australia" to nest in hollow logs or under sheets of bark, they are also said to burrow out a cavity ten to fifteen inches in depth and to fill it with grass, with escape holes among the roots of surrounding trees.

The marsupial mice are particularly useful animals, as their diet includes grasshoppers, termites, beetles, centipedes, and spiders. They are also carnivorous and are quite capable of killing and eating ordinary mice.

One in captivity, weighing just threequarters of an ounce, ate in one night five grubs and three small lizards weighing altogether one ounce. On a pound for pound comparison, even gluttons among *Homo sapiens* would be appalled at such a task!

In colour they are mouse-grey above and greyish-white beneath. Length of head and body:  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches, tail  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

The domestic cat and the fox are by far the greatest danger to their survival.

For the scientifically minded:-

The Genus *Sminthopsis* contains 9 species (Marlow) including 5 species of Fat-tailed Marsupial Mice. *S. murina murina* has developed two sub-species. *Sminthopsis* can be distinguished from all other genera of Marsupial Mice by their very narrow hindfeet, less than 3 m.m. wide. They belong to the family *Dasyuridae*.

Remember - phone numbers for sightings or specimens 511034 after 5 p.m. or 511545.

- Keith King

## THE NATIVE CATS OF AUSTRALIA

These marsupials are called Dasyuroids and are related to the pouched mice and Thylacine. They are about as large as true cats but have pointed muzzles. The skull bears heavy crests and well-developed cheek arches for the support of the powerful muscles. In the spotted-tailed native cat (*Dasyurus maculatus*) the foot pads are striated in conformity with its tree climbing habits, but in the common native cat (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) the first digit of the hind foot is lost and the foot pads are granular. It formerly inhabited treeless rocky country as well as cultivated districts and is a fearless predatory animal.

Native cats are bold, fearless and intelligent; they are fierce little hunters, preying upon small mammals, including rabbits and other rodents, and small birds. They also eat lizards, frogs and large insects. They are regarded by farmers as vermin because they occasionally raid hen roosts. The fact that they destroy numbers of rats and mice and rabbits is overlooked.

Both native cats and tiger cats reveal their savage nature and their courage when trapped or cornered; showing no sign of fear, they snarl and bite in fury.

The range of the Eastern Native Cat includes N.S.W., Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. Native cats are distinguished from Tiger Cats by their smaller size and in having unspotted tails. There are only two known species of tiger-cats. Though the Spotted tailed tiger-cat, largest of the Dasyures, has an average head-and-body length of 24 inches, it is a terror for its size, and the most combative creature in the Australian bush. Its cousin, the Slender tailed tiger-cat of North Eastern Queensland must be extremely rare, for only one specimen has been collected, and that was many years ago.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

To the Treasurer,  
Mrs D. Dark,  
"Nimaloola",  
Russell Ave.,  
Valley Heights, 2777.

Enclosed please find the sum of \$     to cover one years membership\*

Name in full.....

Address in full.....

Occupation.....

\* Individuals \$2.00 annually or \$20.00 Life.  
Associates \$1.00 annually - Subscription to Kalori  
Junior 30 cents annually  
Family \$3.00 annually.