

HETEROPHYLLY IN THE PRICKFOOT (*Eryngium vesiculosum*)

By T. S. HART, Croydon

Portion of a lightly grazed paddock east of Croydon was fenced off during 1948 and sub-divided. For more than a year there has been little or no grazing on it and in a moist, grassy valley there I found, early in September, 1949, a plant with hollow subulate leaves several inches long; leaves appearing later showed a coarsely serrated narrow blade, with centre strip representing the earlier hollow subulate leaf. An *Eryngium* seemed likely, and a search about a mile down the valley, at a place where *E. vesiculosum* had been found, detected similar subulate leaves on the first spring growth (not so advanced). As the season advanced more leaves appeared and the first-flowering shoots were detected in November—definitely *E. vesiculosum*, in which the arched and trailing flower stems contrast strongly with the nearly erect first leaves. Flat rosettes of foliage have been noticed, apparently a condition assumed under grazing. The plant had no doubt been grazed off in other seasons and was unknown to two residents acquainted with the paddock.

Few of the available descriptions mention the hollow subulate condition of the early season's leaves, though Black says they are hollow in another species. Bentham stated, under *E. rostratum*, that in wet situations the leaves are of simpler form, and this may actually be due to early seasonal growth while the place is still very wet. Bentham notices that flowering stems resemble stolons but are not rooting.

These first leaves are of considerable interest for comparison with other species of *Umbelliferae* which retain the fistulate leaf throughout their growth, e.g., *Aciphylla simplicifolia*. Care is needed in recording plants from leaf features alone, especially before maturity. *Nardoo* (*Marsilia*) can have a simple spatulate leaf early in life and then pass through gradations of 2 and 3 lobes to the normal 4-lobed condition.

The development and fading of *Eryngium* flower colour was described in *Vict. Nat.* LIV, p. 177, the examples there dealt with coming from a moist patch south of South Road, Moorabbin, and east of Chapel Rd. Perhaps the colony may still survive there?

NESTING MATERIALS OF THE PAINTED HONEYEATER

Mr. J. H. Willis's report (vol. 66, page 136), on the material used by a pair of Painted Honeyeaters, spurs me on to record some observations made by members of the Bendigo Field Naturalists' Club.

Mr. Eddy, of Diamond Hill, recently gave us a talk on the birds of his district, and exhibited several nests. At question time, Mr. H. Milne asked the speaker if he knew from what plant the Painted Honeyeaters obtained the rootlets with which they lined their nests. He didn't know, but said that they flew some distance to collect them. All nests that I have examined have been lined with the same material.

Our next outing being to Diamond Hill, I determined to find out, if possible, what the material was. Because there were nodes or projections at fairly even distances on the "rootlets," I suspected that stems of some thin plant were used. I therefore examined such plants as *Thysanotus Patersonii*, *Drosera Planchonii*, and *Cassytha glabella*, but they were not like the "rootlets."

Mr. Eddy watched the birds for me, and a few days later reported that he had seen two pairs of birds some distance apart collecting the rootlets of Barley Grass (*Hordeum murinum*). The grass had been turned up by a spade or plough. It would be interesting to know if Painted Honeyeaters in other places use this same material.

—MARC COHEN, Bendigo.



Hart, Thomas Stephen. 1950. "Heterophylly in the Pricklefoot (*Eryngium vesiculosum*).*" The Victorian Naturalist 66, 197–197.*

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