

# Nationalising Nature: Wattle Days in Australia

**Libby Robin**

*No politician or media commentator speaking about the recent bombings in Bali is without a sprig of wattle on their lapel. What is the wattle doing there? Is it only symbolising mourning? Or does it have other layers of meaning? Is the history of 'wattle as nation' so complex that it might have a power to reinforce military sabre-rattling? Wattle is a symbol of nation — but what is a nation without a war, without 'blood on the wattle'?*

*The Bali victims were simply tourists, not all Australian, randomly killed for reasons that remain obscure. Wattle transforms them into war victims. Family members mourning a loved one, killed or injured in the attack sat on 129 chairs in the Great Hall of Parliament. Sprigs of wattle on each chair signalled an appropriation of these individual deaths by the Australian nation. The ceremonial service in Canberra took a tragedy and invested it with military significance. The bishop of the defence forces, The Rt. Rev. Dr Tom Frame, presided. ABC radio and television broadcast the service live to the nation. Commentators and politicians wore wattle again.*

*The old rhetoric of the federation era was revisited and drawn into renewed military service, in service of a new war without an enemy, the so-called 'war on terror'. Last Monday, the foreign minister, Alexander Downer, planted a silver wattle in the grounds of the United States embassy in Canberra, a wattle that implicitly appropriated those tourist deaths into a further commitment by Australia to United States war objectives.*

*Since the early decades of the twentieth century, the alliance between nature and nation has been an uneasy one. There are many nationalist possibilities embedded in the special days of nature. The civics of Arbor Day and Bird Day linked romantic ideas with utilitarian in a bid to morally improve school children. Wattle Day centred more on adults, and on nationalism rather than on civics or nature study. Its symbolism was complex and varied over time. All three 'days' reflect some of the changing relations between nature and nation in a settler society, a relationship that continues to evolve in the present political crisis.*

24 October 2002

## **Symbols for a new nation**

At the time of federation in 1901 imperial economics rather than local environment dictated the symbols for Australia's nationalist moments. Australia's status as an economic nation in the world (particularly the British world) was paramount. The distinctive local fauna and flora were not part of that framework. The kangaroo and emu of the coat of arms were unusual — indeed nearly unique amongst prominent symbols — in their irrelevance to international trade. In the

celebrations of the first federation day in Sydney a parade passed through ten arches of honour. The eighteen national flags that flew above the parade and the arches acknowledged Australia's chief markets (Britain, continental Europe and America) and her main exports — wool, wheat and coal.<sup>1</sup> There is a striking absence of natural or Indigenous cultural symbols in the pomp and ceremony of Sydney's federation day.<sup>2</sup> The opening of the first Parliament in Melbourne in May 1901 was similarly dominated by 'Australia in the world' symbols. It was interesting that it was the Victorian German community, perhaps less anxious about Empire than the British-Australians dominant elsewhere, who broke this mould with an arch that featured the distinctive local lyrebird.<sup>3</sup>

A movement that actively linked Australian nature and nationalism was, however, emerging. Our indigenous nature apparently did not impress our trading partners, but increasingly, it was seen as a way to build good citizens at home. *Dot and the Kangaroo* appeared in 1899, the first of a long line of children's literature that reimagined the 'hostile' in Australian nature as friendly.<sup>4</sup> The *Bulletin* writers of the 1890s celebrated the bush and city-dwellers embraced the bush, at least that accessible by railway and bicycle. With the comfort of respectable guest-houses, the clean morality of the outdoors was no longer compromised by accommodation in a doubtful rural 'public house'. Bushwalking, an inexpensive pastime suited to the straitened circumstances following the collapse of the financial markets in the 1890s, gained popularity in the first years of federated Australia.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of an annual national day was not prominent in the first decade of federated Australia, although 26 January was mentioned in almanacs in 1904 as 'First Landing Day' or 'Foundation Day'.<sup>6</sup> A day celebrating early New South Wales was always a problem for 'convict-free' South Australians and for Melburnians, who shunned Sydney at every turn. But more importantly, national days are for the next generation. As Ken Inglis remarked wryly, 'it is hard to teach schoolchildren about 26 January, because when it comes around they have been on holiday for a month'.<sup>7</sup>

### **National nature days**

At least partly because they were all celebrated in term-time, Arbor, Bird and Wattle Days emerged to prominence in Australia in the early years of the federated nation. They took on some of the national and civic responsibilities for children that Australia Day could not. Trees, birds and wattle blossoms had the added 'national' advantage that they are generic and found in all states.

The North American spelling betrays the origins of Arbor Day, first celebrated in prairie-dominated Nebraska in 1872. The day of trees was invented in a place where there were none, an irony that was missed by its northern neighbour, Canada, which took up the idea with enthusiasm throughout both prairie and forested areas.<sup>8</sup> Both Australia and New Zealand borrowed the idea of Arbor Day from the Canadians. It was first celebrated in South Australia in 1889.<sup>9</sup> In the pre-Federation era, the usual activity of Arbor Day was a dignitary planting one or more significant trees, cheered on by a community audience that sometimes included school children. Once Arbor Day became part of the primary school curriculum (from about 1903 onward), however, large numbers of children became actively involved in tree-planting. Arbor Day focused increasingly on the moral and citizenly futures of the children, while it officially celebrated trees.

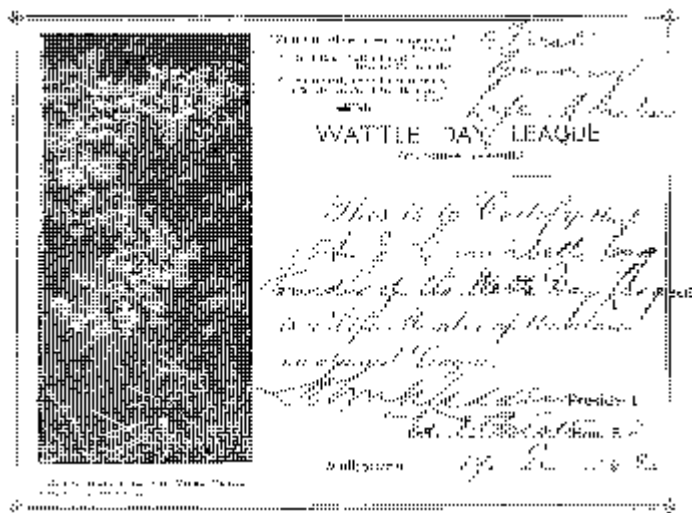
Bird Day was invented for children in 1909. It was introduced to schools and supported by an educational bird club, the Gould League established the same year. Whilst Arbor Days happened all over the world, Bird Days in schools were more unusual.<sup>10</sup> The British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (established in 1889 to stem the trade in bird plumage) initiated a 'Bird and Tree Scheme' in 1902, but did not have the support of the Education Departments that the Gould League enjoyed.<sup>11</sup> In North America, each state adopted its own distinctive local avifaunal emblem (and tree), but the idea of a day that supported birds in general, so was suitable for all states no matter what their avifauna, never emerged there. The national organisation, the Audubon Society (established in 1905) set up a junior branch in 1910. Children received leaflets on various birds and how they should be protected, and there has been an ongoing national commitment to environmental education, but not directly through schools.<sup>12</sup> Even New Zealand, with its dominant bird fauna and its Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (from 1923), did not arrange a Bird Day for schools.<sup>13</sup>

Wattle Day had a brief early manifestation in Hobart Town in 1838, but it did not continue there. On the mainland in Victoria, spring excursions in search of yellow blossom provided incentive for a Wattle Club in 1899. By 1912, the Wattle Club grew into a Wattle Day League, which was a charity group that raised money through the sale of Wattle in city streets in most States.<sup>14</sup>

Days of nature provided opportunities for celebration and reflection on the nation in schools and communities. In an era when white Australia was anxious about its youth and its identity, these were powerful naturalising agents for settler Australians. Arbor, Bird and Wattle Days with their local nature focus avoided the ambiguity of Empire Day, which seemed confusingly about both Australia and Empire.<sup>15</sup> Planting trees, observing birds and wearing wattle provided scope for pride in Australia and its natural environments. Not only Australia, but other young settler nations too adopted this tactic. The children of New Zealand in 1910 were exhorted to plant trees because:

We cannot keep the kauri, and the rimu, and the totara for ever, but we can at least plant trees to take their place, to supply us with timber, and to protect us from droughts, and landslips and floods; and every single tree planted by the children of New Zealand on Arbor Day helps to make the country brighter, and richer, and healthier, and happier — more like 'God's Own Country' than it was before.<sup>16</sup>

New Zealand's local nationalism was also very important at this time, shoring up its decision not to federate with its large neighbour in the west. Arbor Day allayed anxieties about the moral effects of the wildness and freedom experienced by New Zealand children in a land without snakes and other dangerous animals. Certainly the 1897 parliamentary inquiry heard that 'young people in New Zealand were "less moral than in England"'.<sup>17</sup> Replacing undomesticated and unsuccessful New Zealand trees with 'good forestry' species offered an educational and taming activity for what historian James Belich describes as the 'Wild Child' in this era.<sup>18</sup> Although 'nature days' had different emphases in different settler societies, and different reasons for nationalistic fervour, most had an implicit aim to foster good citizens. Nature was close to the heart of the citizenry of nation.



First Wattle Day League Certificate (courtesy Ian Campbell)

The Australian famous writers of the *Bulletin* school of the 1890s saw the city, not the wilderness, as the centre of moral degeneracy. They celebrated the great outdoors and its great moral fibre. But the bush of their writings was the agricultural ideal: the cleared, ‘settled’ country and its sheep, cattle and crops. Like the *Bulletin* writers and cartoonists, Arbor and Wattle activists were anxious about potential degeneration associated with city life. Their solution was not the rural pastorate, but Australian nature itself, albeit through a tamed or domesticated event. Citizenship in Australia for British Australians demanded embracing a very foreign ecology, a nature that was not part of British literature and expectations. By the time of Federation, the ‘biological cringe’ that saw Australian birds, animals and plants as ‘inferior’ was being challenged, but the entrenched low status of Australian plants and animals and their absence from celebratory literary sources remained an obstacle to their full appreciation.<sup>19</sup> The mid-nineteenth century poet Adam Lindsay Gordon’s view of Australia as a land of ‘scentless blossoms’ and ‘songless birds’ prevailed. By the 1920s, C J Dennis was writing poetry explicitly to undermine this view.<sup>20</sup> Take for example the fragment from the last stanza of his poem, *The Golden Whistler*:

Long ere this my song has shamed  
Him who fatuously named  
This a land of songless birds.<sup>21</sup>

Dennis, the ‘poet of the passerines’, was anthologised for use in nature study classrooms in the 1930s as part of an ongoing effort to create a positive literature of Australian nature.<sup>22</sup>

I now want to turn to one institution, the Australian Natives Association and one individual, Archibald Campbell, who were generally credited with conceiving Wattle Day. The ANA and Campbell also had significant and independent roles to play in Arbor and Bird Days.

### The Australian Natives Association and nature for Australia

The Australian Natives Association was established in 1871 as a mutual benefit or friendly society, but it quickly became also ‘a mutual improvement and national association’.<sup>23</sup> The heart of its membership came from the goldfields centres around Ballarat, Victoria, the children of gold-rush immigrants who had just reached their twenties. This group was angry that the Australian-born were stereotyped as lazy, sport-loving, foul mouthed and lacking respect for authority. They wanted to challenge such misconceptions, and wrench some political and social power for themselves.<sup>24</sup> The ANA society replaced ‘ritual mumbo-jumbo’ typical of friendly societies imported from the Old Country (for example, the Oddfellows, the Manchester Unity and the Foresters), with debates, lectures and mock courts. It openly celebrated Australian-ness and, through its membership rules requiring birth in an Australasian colony, excluded imported power-brokers. By the 1880s, the ANA was one of the forces pushing hardest for a federated Australia.<sup>25</sup> Membership of the ANA was limited to males, as women were regarded as too high an insurance risk.<sup>26</sup>



Below: 'Wattle Blossom League Banner' from Sir William Sowden, Australian Wattle Day League, Adelaide 1913, p 7 (used with permission National Library of Australia)



Left: Cover of James Hume-Cook's History of the ANA (1931) (used with permission National Library of Australia)

One of the ANA's early concerns was the search for ‘a national flower or emblem’ for Australia, like ‘the rose for the Englishman, the thistle for the Scotlander and the shamrock for Old Ireland’.<sup>27</sup> Such an emblem could lay a foundation for a distinctive Australianness that did not depend on horse racing or test cricket.<sup>28</sup> Impressed by Canada's recent successful promotion of the maple leaf, the ANA campaigned to make the wattle a flower for the federating nation of Australia.<sup>29</sup> There were fourteen arguments in its favour — including its presence in all colonies, its utilitarian value in tanning hides and its bright beauty. Eventually, despite strong bidding for the more spectacular, but geographically limited waratah, the ANA (with the support of the Wattle League) held sway, and the Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha* became a national floral emblem. Wattle was called upon to represent an egalitarian, classless Australia:

The wearing of the blossom at the same alike by people of all classes and creeds and political parties...is meant to impress upon the mind and the imagination of Young Australia in particular that on the day of its exhibition everybody stands forth as an Australian.<sup>30</sup>

On 13 March 1890, the ladies' committee of the ANA No 1 Branch in Adelaide inaugurated a Wattle Blossom League.

A year later on 'Foundation Day' (26 January 1891) they publicly displayed their Wattle Blossom Banner, featuring Golden Wattle, a wattle important to the South Australian tanning industries of Mt Lofty. Wattles were eagerly embraced by most other states by 1912, though there was some variation in the species.

On the 31 August that year, buttonholes of wattle and boronia (then the Western Australian emblem) were sold in Perth.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, on 10 September, 'under the auspices of the ANA', wattle blossom was 'everywhere in the city' of Hobart.<sup>32</sup> It even went international: the London department store Selfridges filled its Oxford Street store with 'mimosa' to honour Australia's 125th birthday on 26 January 1913.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the strongest evidence for Australia's embracing of the wattle as floral emblem was the outrage roused when South Africa elected to have wattle embroidered on the Coronation Stole in 1911. William Ey of Tanunda wrote to the *South Australian Register* on the subject:

We have lost a great lot of the commercial value of our beloved wattle tree by selling them seed, justly or otherwise; but we shall certainly not permit South Africa, without protest, to plume and decorate themselves with our feathers.<sup>34</sup>

There is no evidence that the 'South African wattle' was the one imported from Australia and now causing much angst in the Cape. It was probably the indigenous 'Doornbloom' *Acacia karroo* that aroused so much discussion in Australian newspapers.<sup>35</sup> In 1910 the new Union of South Africa chose the 'Doornbloom' for the garland encircling the arms on the Governor-General's flag, following the tradition of Maple Leaf in Canada and Fern in New Zealand.<sup>36</sup> Unless the embroidery on the 1911 Coronation Stole featured the distinctive thorns of the South African species, it could, however, easily have been mistaken for an Australian wattle.<sup>37</sup>

William J Sowden, president of the Wattle Blossom League ANA branch, was a distinguished journalist. He was later editor of the *South Australian Register* and a strong advocate of both wattle and women's suffrage. Like many of his fellow ANA members, he was born in Castlemaine in the heart of goldfields Victoria. His adult years, however, were spent in Adelaide.<sup>38</sup> He sought (in 1896) to 'reorganise and remodel the Wattle Blossom League [as] the first visible recognition of the fact that the women of South Australia interested themselves in public life.'<sup>39</sup> The ANA's business also benefited from its association with nationalist debates — the number of branches and its funds rose steadily throughout these discussions. In the twenty years from 1881 until 1901, 194 new branches were established in Victoria alone, and by the 1890s all states had branches although Victoria had some 80% of the national membership.<sup>40</sup> Indeed by 1900, the sharp-witted *Bulletin* cartoonists depicted the ANA Presidency as a 'prize' which would guarantee a seat in the Federal Parliament.



PROBABLE STARTERS FOR THE ANA GREAT EVENT

*'Probable Starters for the ANA Great Event' Bulletin (with permission National Library of Australia)*

Despite its name, the absence of Aboriginal people from the early debates of the Australian Natives Association is total, although somewhat later, it adopted Aboriginal welfare as one of its concerns.<sup>41</sup> The cause to 'improve' the naturalising Europeans born in Australia was paramount in the pre-federation and early federation years. Nature study was one key to both moral improvement and embracing indigeneity (of environments, if not peoples), and warmly supported.

The ANA offered prizes for school gardens from 1903 and encouraged Arbor Days as ways to stimulate nature study in schools.<sup>42</sup> Sponsorship of gardens and tree-planting also served to promote the ANA amongst the children's families. The State School was, in the words of influential first Director of Education in Victoria, Frank Tate, an 'efficient' way of reaching into nearly every home. 'Wherever a dozen children can be got together, you will find the State school'.<sup>43</sup> The *Gazettes* of the Tate era (1902-28) reflected the aspirations not only of teachers and students but also of the community, all very much a part of Tate's 'Education System'. Just to the north, the Director of Education in New South Wales, Peter Board regarded State schools as 'the nurseries of the nation's morality'.<sup>44</sup> Civics and nature study led the new morality. By 1911, according to S G Firth, children no longer learned the scientific principles of agriculture parrot-fashion, but instead were encouraged to grow plants in the school garden and to observe wild nature in the bush at first-hand.<sup>45</sup> This curriculum shift reflected a transition from an imperial yeoman ideal to a genuine local celebration of Australian nature.

Nature, women and children travelled together on the ANA's moral agenda too. Its most important 'whole family' initiative was embracing the beginning of spring through Wattle Days. In 1900 an Australasian Women's Association was formed in parallel with the ANA. Special joint events such as Wattle Day celebrated the softer feminine side of life, but the mainstream ANA remained a men's club. Nature (like the women) was an important concern, but a sideline.

### **A J Campbell and Wattle Day**

The influential ornithologist and newspaper columnist Archibald James Campbell (1853-1929) was the founder of a private Wattle Club in Victoria in 1899. Its members visited such wattle-rich places as Werribee Gorge, the You Yangs and Eltham annually around the first of September. Although eligible as an 'Australian-born', he was not a member of the ANA.<sup>46</sup> But he took up the ANA cause of making the wattle truly national with passion and enthusiasm.



*Archibald Campbell, Sr., with traditional wattle on lapel (courtesy Ian Campbell)*

In early spring in 1908 he treated an audience of the Photographic Clubs of the Melbourne Technical College to a lecture: 'Wattle time or Yellow-haired September'. The 'Yellow-haired September', was a reference to the poetry of Henry Kendall. The 'wattle time' lecture was modified and adapted to several other audiences and finally published in 1921, richly illustrated with the images that had appeared originally as lantern slides.<sup>47</sup>

He too, was interested in the 'feminine' side of wattle:

As our theme, "Yellow-haired September" with her plaits of gold is suggestive of the feminine gender, it is to be supposed that many of our pictorial illustrations, whether allegorical, idealistic, or purely botanical, will be accentuated by the introduction of the human female form — the *beau ideal*.<sup>48</sup>

The mythical and unnamed feminine figures obligingly posing amongst the Cootamundra and Silver wattles were perhaps there to evoke the young nation, like nature, represented as feminine.<sup>49</sup>





*'Cootamundra Wattle' from A J Campbell Golden Wattle, Our National Floral Emblem, Melbourne 1921 (courtesy Ian Campbell)*



*'Silver Wattle' from A J Campbell Golden Wattle, Our National Floral Emblem, Melbourne 1921 (courtesy Ian Campbell)*

### **The Gould League and Bird Day**

Although nature herself was feminine, nature study was not just for the ladies. It was also seen as a powerful, positive and 'civic' influence in the lives of growing boys, the nation's 'next generation'. Perhaps the most important study for active, enthusiastic tree-climbing boys was birds and their nests. The prevalence of egg-collections was testimony to their enthusiasm, and efforts were made to harness this and redirect it to more citizenly ends. The Gould League of Bird Lovers (later, the Gould League of Nature Lovers) brought together two distinct national concerns often treated as separate enterprises: the moral improvement of citizens and the nation's economic future.

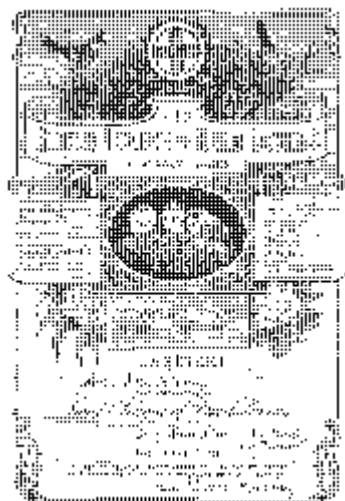
Jessie McMichael, the school teacher who suggested a bird-protection league observed that: 'the thoughtless destruction of bird life would lead to an increase in numbers of insects, which would, if left unchecked, take a disastrous toll on crops of all kinds'.<sup>50</sup> The fact that birds were aesthetically pleasing and that bird-observation was a worthy, citizenly activity was not the prime reason given for the League, although Frank Tate would have been very sympathetic to such reasons. McMichael felt that threats to bird safety were so significant that it was important to invoke 'economic ornithology' in the service of conservation.

Bird Day was conceived as 'a corollary to Arbor Day', an institution that was already established and successful.<sup>50</sup> It raised consciousness of the urgent need for the preservation of birds, in the way that Arbor Day supported the restoration of trees. With the strong support of the national group, the Australasian Ornithologists' Union, the Gould League sponsored its first Bird Day in Victoria on 29 October 1909. Within a year the movement had spread to New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania as well.<sup>52</sup> Jessie McMichael provided generous donations and an endowment for 'competitions and prizes'.<sup>53</sup> The Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, hero of the ANA in the pre-federation years, was the Gould League's inaugural president.<sup>54</sup>

Bird Day was a way of introducing the truly local into the curriculum and developing a local sense of place. Tate's introduction to the 1911 edition of John Leach's *Australian Bird Book* advocated making Australian nature more familiar and more part of mainstream culture, including literature: 'It is time we Australians fought against the generally received opinion that the dominant note of our scenery is weird melancholy'.<sup>55</sup> He blamed awkward scientific names for the paucity of Australian birds in poetry, quoting a clumsy 'romantic' poem published in the *Argus* to make his point:

Dear, all the secret's ours. The Sharp-tailed Stint  
Spied, but he will not tell — though you and I  
Paid Cupid's debts from Love's own golden mint,  
While Yellow-bellied Shrike-Tits fluttered nigh.<sup>56</sup>

The Gould League, then, was to change all this. Leach took some immediate initiatives with names, changing the 'White-throated Thickhead' to the Golden Whistler and the 'White-winged Caterpillar Eater' to the White-winged Triller, but such name-changes were controversial and resisted by conservative ornithologists. The Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, whose first interest was the birds, not the children, was much more concerned about the need to communicate reliably between districts, and to develop a reliable, internationally standard, bird vocabulary. Leach and others aggravated old intercolonial rivalries when they advocated the national adoption of dominant (Victorian) names.



*Doris Murray's Gould League Certificate from the 1920s (courtesy Nadeena Beck)*



*Gould League Certificates 1998, 1999, and 2000 (Photo: Elizabeth Gilliam).*

Bird Day was an excuse for a variety of field camps, exhibitions and bird-call competitions. In New South Wales, the tradition developed at the end of the bird-call competitions for the imitators to produce a collective Dawn Chorus — 'as each child seeks to out-whistle or out-call the other, the result is a terrific hullabaloo'.<sup>57</sup> The League also sponsored a badge for 'any boy or girl who can induce a native wild bird to alight on his or her person'. In four years an astonishing 500 children received the award.<sup>58</sup>

Nature Day activities were sometimes misguided. The so-called ‘Arbor Day activity’ at one Gippsland school resulted in all the trees on the block adjacent to the school being cut down.<sup>59</sup> Equally Bird Day did not always help the birds. Alec Chisholm related the tale of one central Victorian school Bird Day group, walking through the bush. Their teacher was:

‘leading’ in the fashion of a Zoo-visiting father — well in the rear — while the kiddies rambled along with an aimless noisy heartiness calculated to scare every undomesticated creature in the neighbourhood. Presently one bright boy spied the nest of a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater. He yelled gleefully, made a hurried grab, and within the next minute was triumphantly presenting the dainty cradle, with its trio of hapless baby birds, to the accredited leader of the expedition.<sup>60</sup>

Chisholm commented that in later years the distinction between bird-nesting and bird observing was better maintained, and bird study became a favourite in schools. ‘I have seen wild birds catching flies from the hats of children and eating crumbs at their feet’, wrote the Director of Nature Study in South Australia.<sup>61</sup> With the slingshot banned, wild birds came into schoolyards to share the children’s lunches.

It was not just the children who misunderstood days of nature. The destruction of wattle in the interests of Wattle Day reached such proportions that farmers within a day’s drive of Melbourne were locking up their properties and writing angry letters to the papers in the 1920s. Even Archibald Campbell Jr, son of the founder of the Wattle Day Club, found his property targeted. ‘Acacia Orchard’ at Kilsyth, where he grew 300 trees of 50 species, suffered from ‘motorists who tear the limbs from trees to festoon their cars only to discard the wilted bloom along the road when they reach the outer suburbs’.<sup>62</sup> Killing the trees for their blooms (and leaving farmers’ gates open) could hardly be regarded as in the interests of nature or the nation. Perhaps because of wattle over-enthusiasm and a glaring lack of a ‘Wattle Conscience’, the charities which had so successfully raised money through Wattle Day sales just before and during the war years, replaced the national flower with less controversial ‘button day’ fundraising efforts.<sup>63</sup>

The Gould Leagues were most famous for their campaigns against egg-collecting. The first pledge made by all children was ‘I hereby promise that I will protect native birds and will not collect their eggs’.<sup>64</sup> By the outbreak of World War Two, the ornithologists’ journal *Emu* reported ‘visible results’: the public was ‘definitely becoming “nature minded”’, and ‘egg collecting by children [had been] reduced to a minimum’.<sup>65</sup> The other great concern articulated by Jessie McMichael was improving relations between farmers and birds. David Campbell’s poem *Delivering Lambs* captures the very real anxiety of the sheep farmer confronted by a crow:

I have seen  
Black crows ride sheep like jockeys. There’s one or two  
I’ve settled scores with. Their eyes are a primrose blue  
When they turn on the wind with wings like sooty fingers;  
But their cry can lead you to ewes cast in the mist  
And you thank God when they’ve eyes and their lambs  
have too.<sup>66</sup>

This antagonism was challenged not so much by the Junior League, but by adult members of the ornithological community, who analysed many crops and guts to find out what birds really ate. They were able to show that some supposed villains regularly shot by farmers or orchardists were actually eating insects and grubs harmful to crops. Although Education departments increasingly took control of Bird Days and other celebratory days of nature, the activities were well-reported in the *Emu*.<sup>67</sup> A J Campbell was its editor from 1901-13, and was succeeded by Education Department Inspector of Nature Study and Bird Day enthusiast, John Leach, from 1914-23.<sup>68</sup>

### **Valuing nature**

‘Nature study is not science’, Liberty Bailey declared. ‘It is spirit. It is concerned with the child’s outlook on the world.’<sup>69</sup> As such it was the discipline that dealt with the intersection between humans and the environment — or the study of nature and its meanings. It promoted ‘close observation, clear reasoning and a profound emotional response’, and the ‘sense of wonder’ about nature was the most important outcome of an education in nature study.<sup>70</sup> Nature study in schools grasped to find a hybrid between the ‘loved’ and the economic, the warm-hearted and the hard-headed, and to use a scientific method in service of both. ‘To appreciate is dependent upon understanding, and this comes with observation.’<sup>71</sup> The celebratory days of nature in schools and community reflected changing emphases in the meaning of nature for people in Australia (and elsewhere) over the twentieth century.

The Gould League of Bird Lovers, established in 1909, has continued as one of the major avenues of bird-study for school children in Australia for nearly one hundred years. Nature emerges from the early literature of this and other similar organisations, such as the Young Gardeners’ and Junior Tree Lovers’ League, as something to be loved for the sake of human health. Loving nature is an essential part of spiritual and moral growth in children, and without such appreciation and wonder, their childhood is incomplete.<sup>72</sup> Yet there is another nature at work here too. The nature of farmers or foresters, is a suite of resources to be wisely used, not wasted.

The Gould League was established at the same time in Australia to inculcate in children the ideal of responsible citizenship and supporting the economic uses of birds. It has broadened its base to include not just birds, but the whole environment, but its present concerns are not unlike those of the original founders.

### **Wattles, death and the nation**

Wattle Day was the most aesthetic and human-centred of the three ‘days of nature’, and its influence waned as the century wore on. In the 1930s and later the Gould League went from strength to strength.<sup>73</sup> Arbor Day had a steady and strong following, reinventing itself in the 1990s as ‘Arbor Week’. But Wattle Day changed in the early 1930s, eventually fading away altogether. A Wattle Day League limped on in Victoria until the mid-1960s, but the other states were no longer interested. It was increasingly difficult to see what the League did that was different from other groups, such as the Society for Growing Australian Plants

(established in 1957), once its activities were limited to general native tree-planting.<sup>74</sup>

In 1988, the idea of wattle as a national flower was revived, following strong lobbying by a new 'Wattle Lady', Austrian-Australian, Maria Hitchcock.<sup>75</sup> As part of the Bicentenary Celebrations, there was yet another formal declaration that the Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha* was Australia's national floral emblem. Seven Golden Wattles were planted in the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra to mark the event.<sup>76</sup> On 23 June 1992, the Governor-General declared that 1 September would be observed as a 'National Wattle Day' — 'an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate our floral heritage, particularly through the planting of an *Acacia* species suitable for the area in which they live'.<sup>77</sup> This announcement brought together the traditional concerns of Arbor Day and Wattle Day, and tied them to the general tree-planting enthusiasm of the Decade of Landcare. It also solved the original problem of 'which' wattle day, by simply adopting the first day of Spring, not trying to accommodate the different flowering times of wattle in each state.<sup>78</sup>

Celebratory days of nature are almost infinitely flexible: they can be remade to serve new political goals. Tree-planting today is never far away when the latest concern, salinity, is mentioned. New nationalisms urged the revival of Wattle Day activities in the 1990s as anxieties emerged about the appropriateness of celebrating the nation on 26 January, 'Invasion Day' (when the British flag was hoisted in 1788). Indigenous activists and Republicans alike sought new days of national celebration. 'Wattle Day' was proposed as a viable alternative to 26 January. The constant evolution of 'purpose' may skew the wattle's long history of representing Australia, including the sporting colours of green and gold and the nation's numerous postage stamps.<sup>79</sup> The new declaration of 1992 begs the question of why earlier Wattle Day traditions were 'forgotten'.

By the 1930s Wattle Day had an ambiguous reputation. Quite apart from concerns about the damage to trees, there is anecdotal evidence of something more complex. A group of country women, who had attended tiny one-teacher schools in western New South Wales, did not want to plant wattles as part of a 1990s Landcare project because of their 'significant melancholy'.<sup>80</sup> Like the avoidance of lilies in private gardens because of their association with cemeteries, wattles evoked childhood memories for these women of spring in pre-penicillin Australia. Wattle Day ushered in the season of death, presaging diphtheria and whooping cough, contagious illnesses. Children — their young schoolfriends — died at wattle time. Here was an association more powerful even than the annual miseries of pollen-induced hayfever, a black cloud behind each yellow bloom.

### **Wattles, patriotism and war**

Death and the wattle went hand in hand in another context too. Wattle Park in Victoria was established at the height of wattle patriotism. In 1915 the Hawthorn Tramways Trust purchased the land for a public park, but it was not until the late 1920s that extensive planning and development commenced with the construction of a Chalet in 1928, a curator's cottage in 1932 and sporting facilities over the next few years. The Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria and the Wattle League planted the park with 12,000 wattles, natives and ornamental trees between 1926 and

1928.<sup>81</sup> In 1933, a significant tree was planted in Wattle Park: The Lone Pine, grown from the seed of the Gallipoli Lone Pine, 'in remembrance of fallen colleagues 24th Battalion, 8.5.33'.<sup>82</sup> Next to the tree is a clock of the same era, 'in honour of Royden Bennett, killed at Pozières, 1916'. Wattle Day was no longer about wattles. It was about Flanders Poppies. Wattle was the nation, and no longer did Australians concern ourselves with the 'amazing prodigality' and 'golden prosperity' of the indigenous plant.<sup>83</sup> Wattle signified Anzacs at Gallipoli and Australian blood on the battlefields of the Somme.

In Australia, the 'hope' of the new nation manifest in its little sprigs of wattle became complicated by the experience of war. The idea of defending working man's Australia against the greed of the British upper classes first given rise to the expression 'if blood should stain the wattle' in Henry Lawson's poem published in the *Brisbane Worker* in 1891.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps this gave the wattle 'class' problems in the early years of the Wattle League. But the Great War, which united British and Australians of all classes, gave wattle a new focus. After another bloody war, the expression 'blood on the wattle' started appearing in literature again. Here was the missing heroism of the white Australian past, for example, in a play about the Eureka Stockade<sup>85</sup>.

Since the 1940s, many missing frontier stories of Australia have been restored, and the bloody past of cross-cultural relations exposed. Bruce Elder's *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres & Maltreatment of Australian Aborigines since 1788*, is a reminder that the wattle can carry associations with different wars.<sup>86</sup> The gold of the wattle and the red of the blood evoke the Aboriginal colours as well as the war history of European invasion.

The ideas of nature and nation became increasingly separately celebrated in the middle years of the twentieth century. Despite the environmental revolution and the new consciousness of nature that emerged in the late 1960s, the Fellowship of First Fleeters urged flags, bands and anthem competitions for Australia Day celebrations. There was even a suggestion that Australia Day should be an opportunity to conserve historic buildings.<sup>87</sup> There was not a word about nature. The moral obligation of nationalism was still present — 'Parents to be urged to take their children to view these displays' — but it was no longer tied to nature study.<sup>88</sup>

It was a newly-arrived European-Australian, Maria Hitchcock, with happy memories of flower emblems and symbolism from her childhood, who was central to the revival of the wattle as national emblem for Australia. Free of awkward earlier associations of wattles, she urged a new Wattle Day tradition for the nation. Perhaps the wattle's complex cultural baggage makes it particularly suited to being the flagship floral emblem for a settler society.

It may not always be the Golden Wattle. Nature herself may have a final say about a suitable wattle for symbolic emblems. In 1995, bushwalkers in state forest north-east of Melbourne came across a single tree of Cinnamon Wattle, *Acacia leprosa*, with astonishing blood-red flowers. The Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne successfully used cuttings from the plant to vegetatively propagate 'Scarlet Blaze', a new red hybrid wattle released onto the commercial market in 2001. It was immediately nominated for Victoria's 'Centenary of Federation floral emblem'.<sup>89</sup> A hundred years on, nature has been fully nationalised with the blood right in the wattle itself.

**Nationalising Nature: Wattle days in Australia**  
**Libby Robin**

**Acknowledgments**

I am grateful for suggestions on sources and archives, and comments on earlier drafts of this paper from Sara Beavis, Nadeena Beck, Tom Brooking, Ian Campbell, Jane Carruthers, John Dargavel, Tom Griffiths, Tim Rowse, Tim Sherratt, Paul Star and two very helpful anonymous referees for *JAS*. Research was funded by Australian Research Council Discovery Grant (DP0208361).

- 1 J J Keenan, *The Inaugural Celebrations of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Gullick, Sydney, 1904. See also Libby Robin, 'Fleecing the Nation', in *Country and Calling: The Journal of Australian Studies*, No 62, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1999, pp 150-8; 254-6.
- 2 The Commonwealth of Australia's first stamps were 'Kangaroo' stamps, but they were not issued until January 1913. (State stamps were used for the first twelve years of federated Australia, and they too often featured .) The following year the national 'Kookaburra' stamps first appeared. (<http://www.birdtheme.org/country/austral.html> accessed 11 July 02). Kangaroos also appeared on coins as early as 1855, but the 'Kangaroo' after which the 'Kangaroo Office' mint in Melbourne was named was the Clipper Ship, not the animal. See John Sharples, 'Gold and Entrepreneurial Culture: The Kangaroo Office and its Private Mint for Victoria' in Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming (eds) *A World Turned Upside Down: Cultural Change on Australia's Goldfields 1851-2001*, Humanities Research Centre (Monograph no. 14), Canberra, c. 2001, pp 171-87.
- 3 Elizabeth Willis, 'The Beauty and Strength of the Deep Mountain Valleys', in Tom Griffiths, *Forests of Ash*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p 126.
- 4 Ethel C Pendley, *Dot and the Kangaroo*, (illustrated by Frank P Mahony), T Burleigh, London, 1899. (The first Australian edition was 1906). See also Libby Robin, 'Visions of Nature: Wild Life, 1938-1954', *The Victorian Naturalist*, no 102 (5), September/ October 1985, pp 153-61.
- 5 John Rickard, 'Planting the Nation: The Federal Era 1890-1914' in Georgina Whitehead (ed), *Planting the Nation, The Australian Garden History Society*, Melbourne, 2001, pp 1-10. Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt, *Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2000, esp. Chapter 8.
- 6 K S Inglis 'Australia Day' (first published 1967) in Inglis (edited by Craig Wilcox) *Observing Australia: 1959-1999*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1999, p 91.
- 7 *Ibid*, p 100.
- 8 <http://www.arborday.org/arborday/> accessed 15 March 2002.
- 9 Libby Robin, 'School Gardens and beyond: Progressive conservation, moral imperatives and the local landscape', in *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, Special Australian Issue (edited by Christopher Vernon) no 21(2), pp 87-92.
- 10 Libby Robin, *The Flight of the Emu*, Melbourne University Press, Canberra, pp 79-87; I have approached a range of major bird groups in USA and Britain, and while there are recent 'events', such as International Migratory Bird Day (since 1992), there is nothing quite like the Australian national bird-observing day for children, nor the Gould League that supported it.
- 11 The Bird and Tree Scheme continued until 1964, and has since been absorbed by a broader 'schools education programme'. <http://www.rspb.org.uk/features/default.asp> (accessed 14 July 2002).
- 12 Frank Graham Jr., *The Audubon Ark*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1990. See also <http://www.audubon.org/nas/history.html>. (accessed 14 July 2002).
- 13 'Forest and Bird' as it is usually known was established in 1923. See B J Gill, and B D Heather (eds), *A Flying Start: Commemorating Fifty Years of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand 1940-1990*, Random Century, Albany NZ, 1990, p 135. Also <http://www.forest-bird.org.nz/aboutus/history.asp> (accessed 26 March 02).
- 14 Maria Hitchcock, *Wattle*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, XX; also A J Campbell Golden wattle, our national floral emblem, Osboldstone, Melbourne, 1921, p 62.
- 15 Maurice French, 'The Ambiguity of Empire Day in New South Wales 1901-21: Imperial Consensus or National Division', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* no 24(1), April 1978, pp 61-74. Douglas Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism" in British Settlement Colonies', *Journal of British Studies*, no 10(2), May 1971, pp 160-82.

- 16 *The School Journal* (Class V & VI), 1910.
- 17 Quoted in James Belich, *Paradise reformed: a history of New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000*, Allen Lane, South Auckland, 2001, p 358.
- 18 *Ibid*, pp 356-67.
- 19 Tom Griffiths, 'Ecology and Empire: Towards an Australian History of the World', in Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds) *Ecology and Empire*, Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997, pp 1-16, discusses the biological cringe at length (see esp. p 3). The term is also used by Nicholas Drayson in 'Early developments in the literature of Australian natural history together with a select bibliography of Australian natural history writing, printed in English, from 1697 to the present', Unpublished PhD thesis, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 1997.
- 20 C J Dennis (1876-1938) was born six years after Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-1870) died.
- 21 Published first in the Melbourne Herald, this poem was republished in a collection of poems for all seasons: C J Dennis, *The Singing Garden*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1935. The book was introduced by J McRae, from The Education Office, Melbourne.
- 22 Passerines are song-birds (or perching birds). This expression was used in Anon, 'Australian Birds in Australian Poetry', *Bird Observer* August 1997, p 11.
- 23 'Objects' of the ANA as published in 1938-9.
- 24 This argument was advanced by John Hirst in *The Sentimental Nation: The making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Oxford University Press and the Centenary of Federation, Melbourne, 2001, pp 36-9.
- 25 John E Menadue, *A centenary history of the Australian Natives' Association 1871-1971*, Horticultural Press, Melbourne, 1971.
- 26 In 1900 the ANA founded the Australasian Women's Association, but the ANA itself continued as a bastion of male dominance for most of the twentieth century, until it was amalgamated with Manchester Unity in 1993 to form Australian Unity. (see John Hirst, 'Australian Natives Association' in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart MacIntyre (eds) *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Revised edition), Oxford, South Melbourne, 2001, p 50).
- 27 Menadue, Centenary history, p 307.
- 28 The Melbourne Cup attracted 100,000 people to Flemington Racecourse in 1880, about a third of the population of Melbourne at that time. Test matches between England and Australia were rich with Lion and Kangaroo symbolism, but were not otherwise different from the game as conceived by the Marylebone Cricket Club and ratified in 1788. For an interesting discussion of this see K S Inglis 'Imperial Cricket: Test Matches between Australia and England 1877-1900' in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds) *Sport in history: the making of modern sporting history*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1979, pp 148-79.
- 29 Canada's 1867 confederation song 'The Maple Leaf for ever', by Alexander Muir, and the inclusion of the maple leaf on all Canadian coins from 1876-1901 were impressive to the ANA national enthusiasts. For history of Maple Leaf in Canada see [http://www.pch.gc.ca/ceremonial-symb/english/emb\\_other\\_leaf.html](http://www.pch.gc.ca/ceremonial-symb/english/emb_other_leaf.html) (accessed 26 March 2002).
- 30 *South Australian Register* 26 August 1912 [Cutting in the private Campbell archives, held by Ian Campbell, Sydney]. See also A J Campbell 'Wattle memorabilia' in *Golden wattle, our national floral emblem*, p 62.
- 31 *West Australian*, 2 September 1912. Later, the Red and Green Kangaroo Paw *Anigozanthos manglesii* was proclaimed the floral emblem of Western Australia (on 9 November 1960).
- 32 *Argus*, 11 September 1912.
- 33 *Daily Express* (London), 27 January 1913, p 7.
- 34 'The Stolen Wattle Blossom', *South Australian Register* 22 May 1911. Another author (news clipping, n.d. c. 1910, no source, p 1369, Campbell archives) suggested that 'the Protea should be adopted by our friends at the Cape ... no jealousy could arise elsewhere'. The Republic of South Africa formally adopted the King Protea in 1975, after a commission was set up in 1962 that recommended *Protea cynaroides*, but this was resisted because of the limited distribution of the species (in the western Cape only). (Jane Carruthers, e-mail, 11 January 2002; <http://www.saembassy-jakarta.or.id/symbols.html>, accessed 5 February 2002).
- 35 Despite the fact that the majority (about four-fifths) of Acacia species are indigenous to Australia, South Africa has several native wattles.



- 36 F G Brownell, *National and Provincial Symbols and flora and fauna emblems of the Republic of South Africa*, Chris van Rensburg Publications, Johannesburg, 1993, pp 40-2. Even within South Africa there was some confusion as to which Acacia was chosen (the species *Acacia horrida* being confused with *A. karroo*.)
- 37 By the time of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1953), wattle represented Australia and protea South Africa on the Coronation Dress now kept in the Tower of London. She also received a new stole at this time with the 27 floral emblems of Commonwealth countries. [http://www.geocities.com/noelcox/Sovereigns\\_Coronation\\_Robes.htm](http://www.geocities.com/noelcox/Sovereigns_Coronation_Robes.htm) (accessed 14 July 2002).
- 38 Carl Bridge, 'Sir William John Sowden (1858-1943)', in John Ritchie (ed) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 12, Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1990, pp 24-5
- 39 Adelaide Observer 18 July 1896, p 43 cols. A-C.
- 40 Funds in Victoria rose from just over £1,000 to £32,000 in the decade to 1891. Figures were not given for 1901 (possibly because of the effects of the 1890s depression). Membership in Victorian rose from 430 in 1881 to 19,168 in 1901 and 30,321 in 1911. An interstate comparison in 1909 showed a total membership of 34,436 with 27,320 from Victoria, compared with, in decreasing order of size, 2,453 (Western Australia), 1,349 (Queensland), 1,326 (New South Wales), 1,018 (South Australia) and 880 (Tasmania). There were also branches in New Zealand (until 1905), South Africa and London. (Menadue, *Centenary history*, pp 26-30; 143, 162-8. By 1939 the national reserves were a staggering £1,250,000. (See ANA Combined Syllabus, ANA, Melbourne, 1939, back cover.)
- 41 There were some appropriations of Aboriginal motifs in these early years, but a strong 'white Australia' agenda left no political sympathy for Aboriginal people. Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation*, p 39; Menadue, *Centenary history*, p 311.
- 42 Libby Robin, 'Gardens, Patriotism and the Defence of Forests', in John Dargavel (ed.), *Australia's Ever Changing Forests IV*, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies and the Australian Forest History Society, Canberra, 1999, pp 54-68. Also Libby Robin, *Building a Forest Conscience*, Springvale: NRCL, 1991, pp 12, 30.
- 43 See Frank Tate's introduction in *Victoria: Education Department, The Education Department's Record of War Service 1914-1919*, The Department, Melbourne, 1921, pp 4-5. R J Selleck 'Frank Tate (1864-1939)' in Ritchie (ed) *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol. 12, pp 169-72, and *Frank Tate: a biography* Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1982, esp pp 201, 167, 201-2, and 226, where Tate's role in 'days of nature', and their place in the moral curriculum are discussed. See also Robin, 'Gardens, Patriotism and the Defence of Forests'.
- 44 Board's remark was made in 1909. Quoted (p 125) in S G Firth, 'Social Value in the New South Wales Primary School 1880-1914: An Analysis of School Texts', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1970, pp 123-59.
- 45 Ibid, p 123.
- 46 He was a member of the Oddfellows. [Family diary, Campbell archives]
- 47 Campbell, *Golden wattle*, pp 15 and 62.
- 48 Campbell, *Golden wattle*, p 18.
- 49 The youngest figure posing with a wattle is less than two years old and not female! Duncan Campbell, A J Campbell's youngest son stares out slightly bewildered beside the Sunshine Wattle, *Acacia discolor*. (Ian Campbell pers. com. 9/1/02, e-mail 16/1/02.) The accompanying caption 'The sunshine of Autumnal days', was possibly a double reference to the wattle and to the only son of his second marriage, who was born when Campbell was in his sixties.
- 50 The Gould League of Victoria, 1976 (Education Department brochure, typescript). The Gould League has been variously 'of Bird Observers', 'of Bird Lovers', and 'of Nature Lovers'. In 2000, it is simply the Gould League, and its pledge is 'to care for all wildlife, both plants and animals' (from Membership Certificate). The Gould League has been a major force in nature study for school children in Australia for nearly one hundred years, with varying importance between states. After the second world war, it became largely the responsibility of the different state Education Departments, and was particularly strong in Western Australia, and vanished entirely from Queensland. See Libby Robin, *The Flight of the Emu*, pp 79-87.
- 51 A H E Mattingley, 'Origins and Aim of the Gould League', *Monthly Notes*, 14 May 1935. On the history of Arbor Day see Robin, 'Gardens, Patriotism and the Defence of Forests'.
- 52 The Tasmanian Gould League lapsed soon afterwards, but re-established itself about 1920 and ran until 1954. South Australia also had several false starts, but the league there was active in the

- 1920s and 1930s, and was relaunched in 1982. (C F H Jenkins, 'The Gould League in Australia', in John Gould and the *Birds of Australia*, Perth: Gould League of Western Australia, 1983, pp 45-7.) 'Bird Week', as it is now called, is traditionally the last week in October in the south-eastern States.
- 53 Jenkins, 'The Gould League in Australia', p 42.
- 54 The Gould League of Victoria. Deakin used the 1893 ANA conference to establish the Federation League of which he became foundation executive chairman in 1894.
- 55 Frank Tate, 'Introduction' to J A Leach, An *Australian Bird Book*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Melbourne, 1911, p 3.
- 56 Tate, 'Introduction', p 4. See also Jenkins, 'The Gould League in Australia', p 39.
- 57 A H Chisholm, 'Very Strange Voices', in *Bird Wonders of Australia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1948, p 199.
- 58 Jenkins, 'The Gould League in Australia', p 43.
- 59 Robin, 'Gardens, patriotism and the defence of forests', p 57.
- 60 A H Chisholm, 'With Children in Birdland', in *Mateship with Birds*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Melbourne, 1922, pp 70-1.
- 61 Quoted by Chisholm, 'With Children in Birdland', p 74.
- 62 'Wattle vandals', (Melbourne) *Herald*, 24 July 1926; Acacia Orchard statistics from 1921. See Campbell, *Golden Wattle*, p 28.
- 63 'Wattle Conscience' from 'Wattle vandals'. Wattle Blossom sales for charity in Melbourne on 2 September 1912 raised £847. See Campbell, *Golden wattle*, p 62.
- 64 'The Gould League of Bird Lovers', *Emu*, 38 (2), October 1938, p 240.
- 65 'The Gould League of Bird Lovers', p 241.
- 66 As quoted in Anon. 'Australian Birds in Australian Poetry', *Bird Observer* August 1997, p 11. David Campbell's dates are 1915-1979.
- 67 Presidential addresses included 1906, 1907, 1908 and 1912, published as C S Ryan, 'President's Address: The Protection of native birds', *Emu* 6(3), 1907, pp 95-103 (which also proposed the combined Arbor and Bird Day); A J Campbell 'Bird Protection in the Old World', *Emu* 7(3), 1908, pp 126-36; D Le Souëf., 'President's Address: The Most Useful Bird in Australia', *Emu* 8(3), 1909, pp 169-70; J W Mellor, "Bird Protection in South Australia", *Emu* 12(3), 1913, pp 151-7 (which discusses Bird and Arbor Day in South Australia and the Gould League). See also L Harrison, 'A Bird Protection Society'. *The Australian Naturalist* 1(13), January 1909, pp 155-6, and 'Stray Feathers', *Emu* 14(3), 1915, p 171.
- 68 Robin, *Flight of the Emu*, pp 377-8. Alex Chisholm, who inspired the Queensland group was also editor from 1926-1928 inclusive.
- 69 Quoted in Victoria. Education Department, *Nature-study (observational work)*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1945, p 4.
- 70 These were the views of W H Ellwood, Tate's successor as Director of Education in Victoria, in *Nature-study (observational work)*, p 4
- 71 W H Hills, Principal of Hobart Teachers' College. 'Foreword' in J A Fletcher, *Brochure of nature study: suggestions and experiments for use*. Mercury Press, Hobart, c. 1933, p 3.
- 72 See Robin, *Building a Forest Conscience* on school gardening, school forests and Junior Tree Lovers, pp 65-82.
- 73 By 1935, the Gould League president, Arthur Mattingley, could boast that the league had 100,000 members in Victoria alone ('Origins and Aim of the Gould League'. This number was a cumulative total. Three years later it was recorded that '114 000 have signed the pledge', *Emu*, 38, p 240.)
- 74 On Society for Growing Australian Plants and native gardens see Robin, *Flight of the Emu*, p 293.
- 75 Hitchcock, Wattle. See also *Australian Geographic* 61 'Centenary of Federation' edition, Jan-March 2001.
- 76 See: [http://www.pm.gov.au/aust\\_focus/nat\\_symbols/emblem.htm](http://www.pm.gov.au/aust_focus/nat_symbols/emblem.htm) (accessed 4 February 2002).
- 77 [http://www.pm.gov.au/aust\\_focus/nat\\_symbols/emblem.htm](http://www.pm.gov.au/aust_focus/nat_symbols/emblem.htm). (accessed 4 Feb 2002).
- 78 There is always a wattle flowering somewhere in Australia. Although most southern wattles flower in winter-spring, there are widely varying flowering seasons even in the temperate zones.
- 79 A short search of the web revealed that Australia issued postage stamps featuring wattles in December 1913 (1d), 1937 (3d), 9 September 1959 (Golden Wattle) (2/3), 27 April 1970 (Golden Wattle) (5 c), 1 June 1978 (45c), Christmas 1982 (35c), Australia Day 1990 (Golden Wattle)

- (41c), 1996 (\$2), amongst others.
- 80 Sara Beavis had this discussion with a group of older women in the early 1990s. I am grateful to her for reporting it to me.
- 81 [http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1park\\_display.cfm?park=207](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1park_display.cfm?park=207) and signage and other ephemeral literature available in the park, 16 February 2002.
- 82 From the plaque on the tree, 16 February 2002.
- 83 Tullie Cornthwaite Wollaston *Our Wattles* (Lothian Books, Melbourne) published in 1916, the year of Royden Bennett's death, uses these phrases.
- 84 Henry Lawson 'Freedom on the Wallaby', in Lawson (edited by Leonard Cronin) *A Camp-fire Yarn: Henry Lawson Complete Works 1885-1900*, Sydney: Landsdowne, 1984, p 146.
- 85 Leslie Haylen, *Blood on the wattle: a play of the Eureka Stockade* (with foreword by the Rt. Hon. J B Chifley), Angus and Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1948. Ailsa Craig also quoted Lawson in the title of her novel, *If blood should stain the wattle* (Currawong Publishing, Sydney 1947). A later work of fiction about the second world war, is Maria Gardner's *Blood stained wattle*, the author, Pialba Queensland, 1991.
- 86 Child & Associates, Frenchs Forest, NSW 1988. Revised edition 1998.
- 87 Fellowship of the First Fleeters. *Australia Day Celebrations: Suggested Activities*, Sydney FFF, c. 1968. (Pamphlet 16pp NLP 394.26994 F322, National Library of Australia). Section K #16, p 14 refers to built historical heritage. On the environmental revolution in Australia, see Libby Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The rise of ecological consciousness in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1998.
- 88 FFF *ibid*, Section A # 8, p3.
- 89 <http://www.rbgmelb.org.au/ABOUT/Floreowinter.pdf>; <http://www.plants-magazine.com/newplants/newplant193.shtml>, (accessed 15 March 2002). Both show good photographs of the flower.