

"There will I make thee a bed of roses,
With a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle,
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle"

"A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs"

("Sonnets to Sundry Notes of Music," Sonnet Number 6).

THE GOULD LEAGUE OF VICTORIA - SHOWING THE WAY IN ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION

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Introduction:

During my study tour of the Botanic Gardens of Australia, I visited the headquarters of the Gould League of Victoria and saw something of the work this organisation is doing in education. I was particularly impressed with the education resource book the League had produced for the Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens. This publication has been helpful in encouraging the use of the Gardens by school groups. No doubt it has also played a vital part in convincing the authorities of the need to have an educational officer in the Gardens. I have been asked to write an article on the Gould League of Victoria, not just in order that Society members may learn something of this organisation, but rather that they may see if there is anything to learn from the League's active participation in education.

History:

Original Aim: The Gould League was formed in 1909. In its early years its role was to arouse an appreciation of birds and their habitats. Its program was intended to be a counter to the dangers inherent in the pursuits of shooting, collecting and nest-robbing which were prevalent at that time.

This general aim remained constant for almost 50 years, and in 1957 the new Constitution still advocated the promotion by observation, example and precept of a comprehensive knowledge of native Australian birds, thereby arousing such an appreciation of them that harsh protective legislation would be unnecessary, i.e. conservation by education rather than legislation.

Expanded Aim: In 1971 the Gould League broadened its scope to include an overall approach to the total environment, and its stated aims are now:

- (a) To encourage and develop within the framework of the general school curriculum a critical appreciation of birds and the need to preserve them and their habitats.

- (b) To provide schools with materials and activities that will assist them in their environmental study experiences. Programs based on bird observation and studies can be ideal starting points for a wider study of an environment. However, it must be stressed that no single factor can be studied in isolation. The inter-relation of all living things within the environment is the important issue.

Structure:

The Gould League of Victoria is now a branch of the Education Department dealing with the general curriculum area of environmental studies. It is controlled by a Council made up of representatives of the Education Department, as well as non-departmental people. It functions, as a non-profit organisation, its finances being derived from the sale of educational materials. The staff consists of nine teachers (five full time, four part-time) and five public servants.

Function:

- Aims:
1. To influence community attitudes towards conservation and rational management of the total environment.
 2. To provide knowledge of the content of natural and man-modified environments and the means for identifying and interpreting changes in these environments.
 3. To promote an understanding of the inter-dependence of all living species, with particular reference to the needs of our native wildlife.

Objectives:

1. To provide schools, groups and individuals with materials and activity suggestions that will assist children in their environmental study experiences.
2. To develop aids which will provide teachers and children with basic environmental skills, underlying principles, habitat information, indicators of change and development of attitudes and initiative.
3. To operate as a source of low cost, high quality materials for habitat reference.
4. To provide consultancy and in-service experiences for teachers which acquaint them with environmental education activities for children and with project and curriculum choices.
5. In conjunction with other branches, to advise on the use of school, schoolground and community facilities for environmental education.
6. To liaise with various governmental services which have responsibilities in environmental education, to achieve better integration of their work.

Objectives: (Continued)

7. To promote a continual review of environmental education developments and to adjust programs accordingly.

Materials: The Gould League have available a wide range of teaching aids and resource material. Most Gould League productions are based on major Victorian habitats, thus providing relevant reference material.

The materials can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Reference material published by the Gould League - charts, books, Survival stickers, teaching kits, information sheets.
- (b) Materials from other sources - books, charts, basic science equipment.
- (c) Activity ideas for teachers wishing to incorporate an environmental approach in their teaching.

Resource Centre and Consultancy: A central resource centre has been established at the Gould League Headquarters and staff members are available for personalised and group consultancy. It may also be used as a venue for conferences - principals meetings, staff meetings, etc.

Schools attempting environmental projects and courses are encouraged to contact the Gould League for advice. They have specialists on staff who may be able to visit the school and assist in the development of the project.

Here is a sample of the Gould League educational material - this is a page from a booklet on Orchids, one of the "Junior Survival" series. As you will see it actively encourages the child to develop an awareness of and concern for native plants and animals.
