

Australian nature in rhyming slang

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Abstract. The article aims at providing a linguistic and socio-cultural description of Australian rhyming slang reflecting the animal and plant world of both wild and domesticated animals and cultivated plants that accompany human life. The rhymes in most cases encode animal and plant names, but there are also a few rhymes that contain the names of animals in their composition. The rhyming slang samples presented in the article are borrowed from general slang and rhyming slang dictionaries and other sources.

Keywords: linguistic and sociocultural description, rhyme, Australian rhyming slang, animal and plant world of Australia, endemic animals and plants

Introduction

The article adopted a broad understanding of the animal world, which includes the most diverse types of living beings: animals proper, fish, birds, amphibians, insects and other types of living beings. The rhymes selected for analysis reflect the names of those animals and plants that are important for man's existence, play a significant role in human life as people come into direct contact with them. In this respect, the endemic animals, plants and insects, game and wild animals, as well as domesticated animals and birds have luck. Usually, the analyzed rhymes elude the attention of researchers citing examples of Australian rhyming slang or presenting its classification [7], [8], [10], [18],

Purpose of the study

The article continues to develop the theme set in the works of the author [3], [4], [5], [6] and aims to provide a linguistic and sociocultural description of the rhymes of Australian rhyming slang, reflecting the animal and plant world of Australia.

Materials and methods

The rhyming slang samples presented in the article are borrowed from general slang and rhyming slang dictionaries [9], [11], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17] and other sources [12].

The research methods are determined by the purpose and objectives of the research. The main method is descriptive, implemented in the techniques of systematization, generalization and interpretation of linguistic material. Linguistic methods include contextual analysis, definitional analysis, and semantic interpretation.

Results and discussion

We consider first zoological rhymes that contain the names of animals or refer to animals that were familiar to European settlers in their homeland before moving to Australia and which we find on a farm and in the countryside. These are the animals familiar to the eyes of a European: cats, goats, horses, calves, geese, ducks; small animals and parasites (toads, frogs, mice), biting and stinging insects (fleas, ticks, bees, wasps).

Most zoological rhymes are Australian in origin, with the exception of one of the older rhymes known in both Britain and Australia since the mid-19th century **frog/frog and toad** [mid-19C +] (BrE/Aus.) = a **road**. It safely survived the 20th century and is used in this century. Australian in origin are the rhymes **cats and mice** [20C] (Aus.) = **dice** and the polysemantic **white mice** [20C] (Aus.) that encodes: 1) **lice**; 2) [1940s-50s] = **dice**; 3) **ice**. They contend with the British rhyme **rats and mice**.

Zoological rhymes based on the image of a **goat** have to do with **tote**. The rhyme **angora** ← **angora goat** [20C] (Aus.) = **tote** (the totalizer in horse racing) came into use at the turn of the 1980s and 90s. Angora goat refers to the breed of goats with long soft hair. The synonymic rhyme **Billy Goat** [20C] (Aus.) = **the tote** refers to the male goat and competes with the rhyme **nanny / nanny goat** [1960s +] (Aus./BrE) = **the tote**, which, on the contrary, refers to a female goat. The **nanny goat** rhyme was first recorded in 1961 to become widespread in both systems of rhyming slang - British and Australian: The poor old ailing Tote - **the Nanny Goat**, as they call it. [Daily Mail (1970). Cit. Quoted from [11, p. 245]]. The rhyme **giddy goat** [1920s +] (Aus.) = **the tote** came into use in the 1920s. Tote is both an office that accepts bets and a device that is able to calculate the participant's chances of winning the competition. Sweepstakes are gradually becoming a thing of the past. More popular today are bookmakers, which initially accepted bets on races and horse racing at the hippodrome. Over time, they began to accept bets on dog racing and other sports. In Britain, for example, bookmakers devote most of all to football, but they also do not forget other disciplines - tennis, hockey, basketball, formula 1. In Australia, as in England, you can bet not only on horse races, but also on other competitions, including dog racing, tennis, Australian football, etc.

The rhyme **poddy calf** (a hand-fed calf) [20C] (Aus.) = **half (half-a-crown)**; The 2 s 6d half-crown was a 2 shillings 6 pence coin that was in circulation in the UK until 1970.

The rhyme **dead horse** [1940s +] (Aus.) = **tomato sauce** recalls phraseological units **work (off) a dead horse** - to work for wages which all go on paying off old debts and **flog a dead horse** - to try to make people interested in a subject which everyone has already fully discussed, which is no longer interesting etc. A similar rhyme **race horse** [20C] (Aus.) = **tomato sauce** also refers to tomato sauce, but unlike the first rhyme, it evokes completely different associations connected with a sports horse (a horse bred, trained, and kept for racing), the image of a frisky magnificent horse. Equestrian sports have been loved and appreciated in Australia for a long time: the first races for the Melbourne Cup, which have since become a significant event in the life of Australians, took place back in 1861. In the past, only Australian horses and jockeys took part in them, then since 1990 participants from other countries (New Zealand, England, Ireland, and Asian countries) began to compete. Australia prides itself on its horse racing and its ability to raise magnificent horses that compete in races all over the world. Each state holds its own races, which take place in the aura of festivals, and the Melbourne Cup races have even been declared a national holiday and a day off in Victoria.

One more rhyme exploiting the image of a horse and a foal is **horse and foal** [20C] (Aus.) = **the dole** allows to touch on the unpleasant topic of unemployment and discuss the social problem when an unemployed person lives on unemployment benefits or stands in a queue for it.

Let's turn to the rhyme that correlates with the word "**horse**": **apple sauce** [20C] (Aus.) = **horse**. The same rhyme in British slang describes, in particular, the last finishing race horse that 'ran like a pig'.

Dogs have always played a special role in people's lives: even the ancient Greeks, Assyrians, Huns, Gauls, and Celts fell back upon the assistance of four-legged shepherds, hunters, and guards. Nowadays, in addition to participating in protection, hunting, and in military operations, the dog is on guard duty, warns of the appearance of the enemy, is used in the communications service. In peacetime, the dog "guards the law", pursues criminals, looks for weapons, drugs and other contraband, participates in rescue operations. In addition, dogs have proven to be excellent guides for the blind, they also help the deaf and contribute to the rehabilitation of people with disabilities. [1].

The dog and the cat are the most familiar animals to London Cockneys. It is no coincidence that in the rhyming slang of the English-speaking countries we find at least a dozen rhymes encoding the dog: **cherry hog** [mid-19C], **chock and log** [20C] (Aus.), **Christmas log** [1970s +], **golliwog** [1910s], **hollow log** [1970s] (Aus.), **London fog** [late 19C -1910s], **Yuletide log** [1970s +] and more than a dozen rhymes containing the word **dog** in combination with the names of other pets and some objects associated with dogs, for example, **Bellevue Dogs**

= **clogs** (Manchester); **Cat and Dog = 1) bog**, lavatory; 2) **catalog; dog/dog and bone** [1940s +] (BrE/IrE) = **phone**; **dog and cat = a mat**; **dog and duck = ruck**, a fight; **dog and lead = weed**, marijuana (I lost my **Dog and Lead**); **dog and pup = a cup**; **dog's eye** [1960s] (Aus.) = **a meat pie** (Can I have some dog horse on me **dog eye**?) and some others.

Australian rhyming slang contains the rhymes **chock and log** [20C] (Aus.) = **dog, hollow log** [1970s] (Aus.) = **a racing dog**, as well as the rhyme **all stations** [20C] (Aus.) = **an Alsatian dog**, a German shepherd. As J. Green notes, perhaps here we have a case of comic distorted pronunciation [13, p. 17].

The rhyme **ducks and drakes** [1960s] (Aus.) = **shakes**, DTs encodes the most common type of mental disorder associated with alcohol abuse – “delirium tremens” or “the shakes” (usually used to mean “fever”, “febrile chills”). The rhyme has been used in the Australian variant since the 1960s. It plays on the name of a (children's) game, when flat stones are thrown over the surface of the water with a sweep so that they bounce. Another rhyme based on animalistic ornithological metaphor is **ducks and geese** [1960s] (Aus.) = **the police**. It has been in use in the Australian rhyming slang since the 1960s.

Wild birds are represented by the rhyme **cock-sparrow** (Pron. 'Sparra') [1960s +] (Aus.) = **yarra**, mad, insane. The ornithological rhyme is based on the image of a male sparrow. Metaphorically, the word is used in relation to a pugnacious person and a bully.

Several rhymes contain the names of parasites, blood-sucking creatures, for example, fleas and ticks, which cause a lot of trouble for humans and animals: **fleas and itchers/itches** [1960s] (Aus.) = **pictures**, cinema, movie show; **fleas and scratches** [20C] (Aus.) = **matches**; **cattle ticks** [20C] (Aus.) = **Catholics**.

There are rhymes that themselves encode such parasites: **two /2 Ues** [20C] (Aus.) = **fleas** [13, p. 1241] and **willy lees** [1920s] (Aus.) = **fleas** [13, p. 1288], registered in J. Green's dictionary.

Two Australian rhymes **dibs and dabs** [20C] (Aus.) = **crabs**, body lice and **dribs and drabs** [20C] (Aus.) = **crabs** refer to pubic lice and infestation.

Some entomological rhymes containing insect names rhyme with **tea**. Australian rhyming slang contribution to insect-based tea-rhymes is **wasp and bee** [20C] (Aus.) = **tea**. (bees make honey, and honey is quite a suitable attribute for tea). The rhyme **Joe Ree** (Aus.) = **bee (s)**, on the other hand, encodes the stinging insect that makes honey.

A special colouring of the rhyme list is created by the names of wild animals, especially those which are rare and endemic animals, found only in Australia or considered typical for Australia. In this respect, the rhyme **wombat = hors de combat**, dead is a good example. Etymologically, hors de combat (Fr.) means literally ‘out of (the) fight, disabled or injured’, ‘out

of action' (as a result of injury, etc.). The wombat is a herbivore with large claws adapted for digging the ground and digging holes, outwardly resembling small bears. Wombats are nocturnal dwelling in the southern and eastern parts of Australia, in places with suitable soil for digging holes. [3].

Proof of the uniqueness of the mammalian world is the diversity of Australia's marsupials. A striking representative is the kangaroo. They say that when James Cook saw a kangaroo, he decided that there was a two-headed animal in front of him: the head of a cub was peeping out of the animal's bag. A common myth about the kangaroo's English name is that it was a Guugu Yimithirr phrase for "I don't know" or "I don't understand"

For obvious reasons, rhyming slang has immortalized the kangaroo in a polysemantic rhyme that corresponds in Australian and British rhyming slang to the word **screw**, a prison warder. Australian rhyme, colloquially reduced to **kanga**, has been in circulation since the 1920s, and its abbreviated version has been around since the mid-20th century. The meaning 'prison warder' gave rise in the course of time to the metaphorical meaning **teacher** (about a strict and fault-finding school teacher). Three decades later, the rhyme began to be used to denote a new referent: **screw**, money earned (income, wage or salary). In British rhyming slang, **kangaroo** [20C] = **a Jew** [1920s +].

The rhyme **bull ants** [1920s-1930s] (**Aus.**) = **pants**, trousers is also based on the name of an endemic insect, the bulldog ant, a large Australian ant with large jaws and a powerful sting. Bulldog ants are found only in Australia and on the island of Tasmania and are one of the most dangerous genera and species of ants, as they have a strong sting and poison. Bites, or rather the sting of certain species, such as the red bulldog ant, can cause severe and prolonged pain that lasts for several days in humans. In some cases, severe allergic reactions and even anaphylactic shock are noted, which can lead to the death of particularly sensitive patients.

The rhyme **witchetty grub** [20C] (**Aus.**) = **cub**, a boy scout is based on the native name for the large, white, wood-boring edible larva of certain Australian moths and beetles that are part of the Aboriginal diet. [4].

After the penal colony of New South Wales was created in the eastern part of Australia in 1788, the settlement and development of Australia began, accompanied by acquaintance with the unusual nature and its representatives. As soon as the Europeans set foot on the land of the new continent, an unpleasant discovery was made: the area was already occupied by snakes. Up to 140 species of these reptiles live in Australia. Though only some of them are poisonous, meeting most of them is extremely life-threatening. Snakes can be found everywhere, in the most unexpected places, and locals are not surprised to see reptiles in a store or in their own bathroom. But it should be noted that bites are quite rare. Most snakes in Australia are more likely to hide

from a person when they approach, or simply will not leave the shelter. They do not perceive people as food and do not pounce on them. However, it doesn't hurt to be careful. There is a polysemantic rhyme **Joe Blake** [1940s +] (Aus.) = **snake**, colloquially reduced to the first component **jo**. At the same time, the rhyme came to be associated with the word **steak**. Its British relative is much older: **Joe Blake/joe** = 1) [late 19C +] a **cake** (BrE) (Want some **Joe Blake** mate?); 2) [20C] a **stake**, a bet. The eponymous Joe Blake is probably fictitious.

Let us now turn to the rhymes that encode the names of animals living in the water: these are, first of all, sharks which are quite diverse, and some species are very dangerous to humans. Shark attacks on humans are common in Australia's Great Barrier Reef. From time to time, the reef is visited by voracious predators, frequent guests in shallow water - sand sharks, tiger sharks and reef sharks and other species. Of these, tiger sharks are very dangerous. Reef sharks can bite a fisherman or diver. There is a serious debate in Australia over the acceptability of shark traps. The opportunity to admire the gray nurse shark in South Wales, the gray reef shark in Queensland, and the largest white shark on the south coast is used by local authorities to attract fishermen and divers.

It is not surprising that we find several rhymes with the dangerous oceanic predators lurking behind them: the rhyme **Joan of Arc** = **shark** in particular, and its convoluted form **jonah** ← **Joan of Arc** (Aus.) = **shark**. It exploits the name of Jeanne d'Ark, who turned the tide of the Hundred Years War. In this sense, the rhyme has been known since the early 1940s. The rhyme is polysemantic and, in addition to the shark, correlates with such referents as: **Joan of Arc** = 1) [20C] a **park**; 2) [20C] a **lark**, a situation. In the minds of the enlightened people Joan of Arc is associated with the late medieval period in the history of England, marked by the Hundred Years War, which was a series of military conflicts between England and France and lasted a total of 116 years (from 1337 to 1453; hence the name). The pretext for military clashes was the claims of the English royal dynasty of Plantagenets to the French throne and the desire to return the lost territories. The origin of national identity and fortitude in the French people is associated with the war, which was largely facilitated by the French national heroine Jeanne d'Arc. The fate of the Maid of Orleans is sad: she was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake. Subsequently, in 1456, Joan of Arc was rehabilitated and in 1920 canonized - canonized by the Catholic Church. [2].

The Australian rhyme **Noah's/Noah/Noah's Ark** (Aus.) = **shark** includes the name of the biblical character **Noah**, who was the last of the Old Testament patriarchs before the Flood, coming in a straight line from Adam. According to the Bible, Noah was a righteous man, for which he was saved by God from the Flood and became the continuer of the human race. To this end, God commanded Noah to build an Ark and take there his family members and a couple of

animals of each type. 365 days after the flood began, Noah and his family and the animals were able to get out of the ark, which washed ashore on the mountains of Ararat, where Noah offered sacrifices to God and received his blessing as an ancestor: be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.

It is of interest to note that the popular rhyme **Noah's Ark (Noah's Ark)** is polysemantic and rhymes with a number of referents, but it is only in relation to the referent **shark** that it demonstrates its Australian origin: **Noah/Noah's/Noah's Ark** = 1) [late 19C] a **lark** (a game; crime); 2) [late 19C] a **lark** (the bird); 3) [late 19C] **park** 4) [late 19C +] **nark**, (a [police] informer, informant) → an unpleasant person; 5) **Noah** = a **shark** (Aus.); 6) **dark** (no light) [11], [14]. The rhyme **Noah's Ark** = **nark** ('an informer') was in widespread use in the first half of the 20th century. According to J. Ayto, it is used mainly in Australia and New Zealand in the meaning of 'an irritating person' [11, p. 4-5]: Ya knows Bill, yer getting 'to be a real **Noah's Ark**. [J. Alard. He Who Shoots Last (1968). Cit. Quoted from: [11, p. 5]. In the sense of '**shark**', the rhyme was first recorded in 1945, becoming one of the most commonly used to refer to a shark, usually in a reduced form: A lotta them beaches in Oz are full of **Noahs**. [Barry Humphries Bazza comes into his Own (1979). Cit. after: [11, p. 24]]. The use of the rhyme in the meanings of 'lark' ('a good laugh'), 'a bird' and 'park' dates back to the late 19th century., The rhyme is usually used in the abbreviated form **Noah** for the words '**park**', '**nark**', '**shark**' [2].

The rhyme **marcus clark/Marcus Clarke** [20C] (Aus.) = **shark** is most likely based on the name of the Australian writer of the late 19th century Marcus Clarke (1846 - 1881), who became widely known for his novel For the Term of his Natural Life (1874), which takes place in the first Australian penal colonies.

As to the the rhyme **joe marks** [1930s-40s] (Aus.) = **sharks**, much remains unclear: Joe Marks, who gave his name to the rhyme, is probably an unreal person.

The rhyme **after darks** (Aus.) = **sharks** is one of the youngest.

We may say that the gray nurse shark is lucky as it registered in a separate rhyme **gray nurse** [20C] (Aus.) = a **purse**. Nurse sharks reaching up to 4 meters in size are common in the shallow waters of the tropics and subtropics and are considered phlegmatic, slow coastal predators. Phlegm and apparent good nature distinguish nannies from other bloodthirsty sharks. They attack people only when they feel a direct threat to their lives.

The rhyme **John Dory** and **JD** (Aus.) = a **story** [John Dory is an edible coastal fish] shortened to the initials **JD** as in the example "What's the **JD**? What's happening?", refers to the valuable game fish sunflower; common dory. The sunflower is also called the "St. Peter' Fish": according to legend, a round black speck, often framed by a strip of yellow color, on both sides of the fish, is the fingerprint of the Apostle Peter himself.

The rhyme **Murray cod (Aus.) = nod**, betting on the credit or, “on the nod” captured a large, predatory freshwater fish Murray cod, not associated with the Northern Hemisphere sea-cod (*Gadus*) species. The fish, native to the Murray-Darling Basin, Australia's largest and most important river system, is the largest exclusively freshwater fish on the continent. The long-living fish has several names: cod, greenfish, goodoo, Mary River cod, Murray perch, ponde, pondi, and Queensland freshwater cod. Murray cod is a popular fishing and aquaculture species. The fish is named after the Murray River.

The Murray cod plays a very important role in the mythology of many Aboriginal tribes in the Murray-Darling Basin, and for some tribes, especially those that live along the Murray River, the cod has been an icon. The myths of these tribes tell about the creation of the Murray River by a giant cod, which tried to escape from the hunter along a small stream. With her body and the beat of her tail, she expands the stream to the size of a river and creates bends in it.

For the word fish we found the rhyme **dirty dish [20C] (Aus.) = fish**.

The rhyme **cries and screeches [20C] (Aus.) = leeches** characterizes very well, in its emotional connotation, the attitude of the layman towards leeches, which in the past were used mainly for bloodletting (hirudotherapy is one of the most ancient and effective methods of treatment). As is known, today leeches successfully treat gynecological, urological, neuralgic and cardiovascular diseases, as well as sinusitis, otitis media, bronchitis, varicose veins, etc. The overwhelming majority of leeches (Hirudinea) inhabit freshwater reservoirs with stagnant or low-flowing water. They are well adapted to the predatory and parasitic way of life. Leeches are listed in the pharmacopoeial clause and are a generally recognized drug, but their appearance disgust many people and therefore the rhyme **cries and screeches [20C] (Aus.) = leeches** appears suitable and witty.

Our analysis of the rhymes describing the nature of Australia (flora and fauna) would be incomplete without mentioning phytomorphic rhymes. These include, first of all, the rhyme **gum trees [20C] (Aus.) = knees**, referring to the varieties of the Australian eucalyptus. It is known that Australian vegetation is dominated by two types of plants - eucalyptus (gum tree) and acacia (wattle). Gum tree is the generic name for smooth-barked trees and shrubs for three closely related eucalyptus species. The name gum tree can also be applied to black gum, sweetgum and water gum. Australia is home to between 500 and 800 species of eucalyptus trees, which range from tropical species in the north to alpine species in the southern mountains. Eucalyptus leaves are tough or leathery and are described as sclerophylls. They are the main food of koalas.

The rhyme **tree and sap [20C] (Aus.) = a tap** (faucet) plays on the connection between the tree and the tree sap that feeds the tree when it's time to bud.

The rhyme **Moreton Bay fig = gig** is based on the common name for the plant *Ficus macrophylla*. (See Section 4.4 in 6).

The polysemantic rhyme **haricot/haricot bean = 1)** [late 19C-1900s] **bean**, the penis; 2) [1960s +] (**Aus.**) **queen**, a male homosexual is based on the name of a herbaceous garden-and-field plant in the legume family whose seeds, beans, are eaten.

Conclusion

Australian rhyming slang successfully competes with its British (English) counterpart and is almost as strong, but remains less well-known and poorly studied. The article dealing with Australian nature in rhyming slang fills this gap to some extent.

Australian flora and fauna, and wildlife first of all, are represented by the rhymes that encode the names of land animals that live next to humans, are domesticated or, on the contrary, are the subject of hunting or fishing, are dangerous to humans, or are of interest to science. The rhymes in most cases encode the names of animals, while the phytomorphic rhymes encoding the names of plants are not numerous. Some rhymes have to do with endemic animals and plants. There are a few rhymes naming fish, crustaceans and molluscs, the inhabitants of the water and sea depths. There are also a few rhymes that themselves contain the names of animals and plants in their composition.

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