

The North Queensland Naturalist

The Journal and Magazine of the North Queensland Naturalists' Club

Vol. XIX

JUNE 1st, 1951

No. 97

Remains Of Aboriginal Habitation On the Great Barrier Wall

(By Dr. P. O. Flecker, Mareeba)

About thirty miles north-west of Charters Towers, the Great Basalt Wall is encountered; it is in this stony terrain that so much evidence of native habitation can be found. The Wall was described by the geologist, William H. Rands, in 1891, thus:—

some miles of well-grassed open country in the middle of this basalt. Its average breadth is about eight miles. Its general appearance is that of a recent outflow of lava, and it probably represents the latest outflow in the district."

The description is a good one ge-

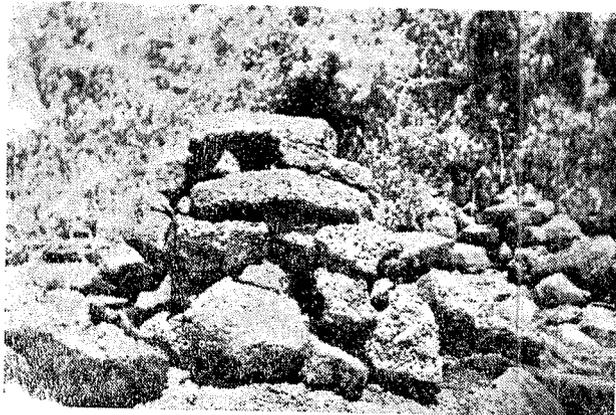


Fig. 1. Stone Cairns.

"It runs along in an east and west direction, at a distance of from four to six miles north of Lolworth Creek. The basalt is highly scoriaeous. Everywhere the cracks produced in the rock on cooling are visible, and there are immense spheroidal-shaped masses in it, also produced by cooling. The lava must have outflowed in a viscous condition, for the well-known 'ropy' structure, formed by masses of semi-liquid lava rolling over and over, is very conspicuous; this structure is easily seen even in hand specimens.

"The basalt does not form a wall in the ordinary sense of the word—that is to say, there are no perpendicular cliffs of it, but it gradually rises in steps, getting thicker and thicker as it recedes from the margin. It is destitute of any vegetation, with the exception of some plum and bottle trees, and a few other scrub trees. I was informed by Mr. Clarke, of Toomba, that he had discovered

logically. Rands, however, appeared to have little interest in the flora, as the growth of trees is fairly thick and most varied. In addition to the Burdekin Plum (*Pleiogyne solandri*) and bottle trees (*Sterculia*) mentioned numerous figs *Bauhinias*, and umbrella trees (*Brassaia actinophylla*) are encountered, making progress difficult in places. Surface soil is completely absent, consequently there are no grasses, except in a few areas which represent the dried beds of lakes. At the time of visiting, these lakes were full and there was only a narrow margin of grass at the edge.

The wall is approximately fifty miles long; I learn from residents of that district that the fish-traps described are a feature of the whole area.

The area visited was a portion of the Wall south of Fletcher Creek, adjacent to the old Southwick homestead.



Fig. 2. Fish-Race. The figure is standing in the race. The far end of the race is visible behind and above the shoulders.

FISH-RACES

Due to the rising of the basalt in step-like formation, valleys have been left in the basalt. During the wet season, the water courses along these valleys, and these rivulets abound with fish. When visited (1/10/50) there was no flowing water, though several pools were found which contained fish. The rivulets had been converted into narrow races, about three feet wide, by piling loose boulders into walls about two feet high on each side of the water flow. These races are numerous, and some systems extensive, one being followed for about a quarter of a mile. Occasionally a branch of a main channel is to be seen, which follows for some yards

parallel to the main channel before ending blindly. Deeper holes are found, some in continuity with the races, and some separated from them. Apparently the former were used for netting or spearing fish shepherded along the channels, and the latter for holding captured fish. Some blockages in the main races are seen: though these appear to be part of the traps, it is possible that they are due merely to the falling in of the stone embankments.

FUNNEL TRAP

About two miles west of Southwick, large lakes are found, through which the water flows slowly, forming a connection between the waters of Lolworth and Fletcher Creeks. Between two of these lakes is a narrow

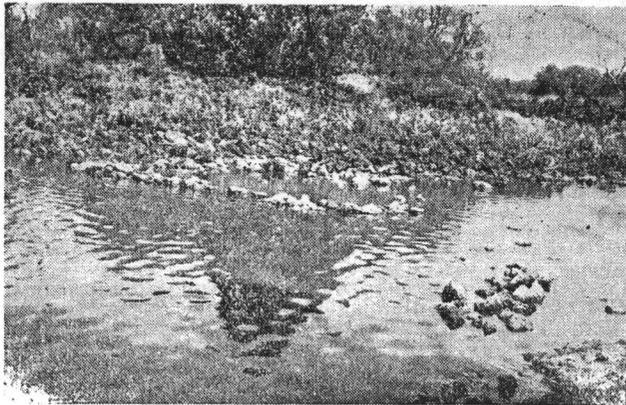


Fig. 3. Funnel Trap.

strait, about thirty yards wide, which has been further narrowed by two walls of stone, converging to a narrow gap. Fish could be driven into this structure, and speared as they passed through the narrow opening.

OTHER SIGNS OF HABITATION

Camping sites are numerous. Here loose stones have been removed over areas about thirty feet in diameter, and thrown in a disorderly fashion about the periphery. In several places cairns of stones, piles about three feet high, can be found. The significance of these is obscure. In other places, holes can be seen in the rock, with the removed stones

scattered about. These are above the level of wet-season water, so their function can only be guessed. Possibly they represent places where some animal which sought refuge in the rock crevices was dug out for food. No evidence of old fires or food remains was found. This is not surprising as rain would rapidly wash charcoal, etc., into the crevices which cover the basalt. A kitchen midden, described to me by Dr. T. R. Edmeads, of Charters, Towers, as existing in the locality, was not found. Several good specimens of grinding mills, of the pestle and mortar type, have been collected close to the Wall by Dr. J. Allingham, of Fletchervale.

Expedition Through Cape York Peninsula From Palmer River To Fairview (Contd.)

(By Douglas Veivers)

Night travel being impracticable, it was with more optimism than good sense that we departed from the Palmer in the early hours of one evening, on the short run across the Divide to the St. George River. In usual form, we chose the rougher and more vague of the two roads, and after many halts and false turnings were considering the advisability of staying further travel until morning, when the decision was clinched by the development of mechanical trouble in the vehicle in the form of a sticky clutch.

The grass here was shoulder high and in these winter months as dry as tinder. The burning off of an area for a camp would have resulted in a bushfire of mammoth proportion. The vehicle was loaded to canopy height with stores and offered no sleeping room and the various implements which might have been used for clearing a section of the ground were packed at the bottom of the load. Much too tired and dejected to undertake any considerable exertion, we bedded down for the night in the open, and I for one, spent some in chagrin in an endeavour to wedge my body into a comfortable position between the thickly growing tussocks of spear grass.

It was one of many strange camps on that journey.

The nights in these regions are strangely fascinating. The light, warm breezes which blow across the hills after dusk continue till the hour of nine or ten, and gradually die away. Subsequently the temperature falls rapidly till by dawn the air is still and particularly cool.

Before the first grey of dawn appears, in that uncertain hour between darkness and light, the silence of the region is broken by a strange rhythm, a mere murmur at the beginning, rising in volume till it reaches a steady, persistent theme, then to fade away with the first rays of the sun. It is the combined melody of the numerous varieties of small birds, the butcher birds, the thrushes and the robins, and others too many for mention here, all keeping time to the regular sharp cry of the blue winged kookaburra, *Dacelo leachi* or Forest Kingfisher, *Halcyon macleayi*, as it is more familiarly known.

We rose with the first notes of this strange glee club, and crept along the remaining few miles to the St. George River with the gears of the utility in second. We had carried no water with us and it was necessary to reach some.

The St. George, a small, normally dry tributary of the Kennedy flows through a region of some particular note. Most interesting perhaps are the bare sandstone ridges in the vicinity of the crossing and on which I have written in this magazine previously. The weathered cliff faces still bear indications of early native art and stencilling in the protected crevices and caverns. In the lower section of the ridges the sandstone has been eroded by the action of wind and rain into strange and interesting formations. I should have liked to have spent several weeks in the area, scouting out such places of interest and oddity, but our stay was a short one.

(Continued on Page Six)

A Check List Of Australian Dryopidae

Order, Coleoptera

(By J. G. Brooks, B.D.Sc., F.R.E.S.)

This paper has been prepared principally from the papers by the late H. J. Carter and Mr. E. H. Zeck, with some assistance from Messrs. Keith C. McKeown and Alex N. Burns, who have checked literature which was not available to me.

Family DRYOPIDAE

Sub-family DRYOPINAE

HYDRETHUS Fairm.

1. *australis* King.
2. *leai* Cart.

Ann. Soc. Ent. Belg. 1889, p.90.
Genotype. *H. dermestoides* Fairm.
Trans. Ent. Soc. N.S.W. 1865, p.159. (*Lutochrus*).
C. & Z. Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.52.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.64.
C. & Z. Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.52.

N.Q., N.S.W.
N.Q.

Sub-family HELMINAE

AUSTROLIMNIUS C. & Z.

3. *atriceps* C. & Z.
4. *diemensis* C. & Z.
5. *luridus* C. & Z.
6. *metasternalis* C. & Z.
7. *montanus* King.
8. *oblongus* C. & Z.
9. *politus* King.
10. *suffusus* C. & Z.
11. *variabilis* C. & Z.
12. *victoriensis* C. & Z.
13. *tropicus* C. & Z.
var. *asper* C. & Z.

Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.61. l.c. 1932, p. 204.
Genotype. *A. (Elmis) politus* King.
Aust. Zoologist, 1932, p.203.
l.c. 1935, p.79.
l.c. 1929, p.62.
l.c. 1938, p.170.
Trans. Ent. Soc. N.S.W. 1865, p.160. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1933, pt.v.
Trans. Ent. Soc. N.S.W. 1865, p.160. (*Elmis*).

S.Q.
T.
S.Q., N.S.W.
V.
N.S.W.

STENELMIS Dufour.

14. *pallidipes* Cart.

Aust. Zoologist, 1935, p.80.
l.c. 1932, p.203.
l.c. 1929, p.61.
l.c. p.69; 1932, p.204. (*Neosolus*).
l.c. 1929, p.69.
Ann. Sci. Nat. 1835, p.158.
Genotype. *S. consobrina* Dufour.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.63 (*Elmis*).
C. & Z. Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.68.
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.53.

N.S.W.
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V.
N.Q., N.T.
N.T.

KINGOLUS C. & Z.

15. *aeratus* Cart.
16. *cupreus* Cart.
17. *flavoplagiatus* C. & Z.
18. *flavosignatus* C. & Z.
19. *heroni* C. & Z.
20. *metallicus* King.
21. *quatuor-maculatus* King.
22. *tinctus* C. & Z.
23. *tyrrhenus* C. & Z.
24. *yarrensensis* C. & Z.

Genotype. *K. (Elmis) metallica* King.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.62. (*Elmis*).
l.c. p.507.
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.54.
l.c. p.55.
l.c. p.56.
Trans. Ent. Soc. N.S.W. 1865, p.160. (*Elmis*).
C. & Z. Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.55.
Trans. Ent. Soc. N.S.W. 1865, p.101. (*Limnius*).
C. & Z. Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.55.
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.57.
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.56.
l.c. p.57.

N.S.W.
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N.S.W.
N.S.W.

SIMSONIA C. & Z.

25. *allmani* C. & Z.
26. *angusta* Cart.
27. *brooksi* C. & Z.
28. *cotterensis* C. & Z.
29. *eborica* C. & Z.
30. *hopsoni* C. & Z.
31. *irregularis* C. & Z.
32. *leai* C. & Z.
33. *longipes* C. & Z.
34. *nicolsoni* Cart.
var. *bicolor* Cart.
35. *purpurea* Cart.
deani C. & Z.
36. *tasmanica* Blkb.
37. *tonnoiri* C. & Z.
38. *vestita* C. & Z.
39. *wilsoni* Cart.

Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.58.
Genotype. *S. (Elmis) tasmanica* Blkb.
Aust. Zoologist, 1936, p.158.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.62. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1938, p.170.
l.c. 1933, pt.v.
l.c. 1935, p.79.
l.c. 1929, p.58.
l.c. p.60.
l.c. p.59.
l.c. 1933, pt.v.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.61. (*Elmis*).
l.c.
l.c. p.508.

N.S.W.
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N.Q.
F.C.T.
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N.S.W.
N.S.W.
N.S.W.
N.S.W.
N.Q., S.Q.
N.S.W., V.
V.
S.Q., N.Q., N.S.W.

NOTRIOLUS C. & Z.

40. *allynensis* Cart.
41. *barretti* Cart.
42. *davidsoni* C. & Z.
43. *dorrigoensis* C. & Z.
44. *galstonensis* C. & Z.
45. *humeralis* C. & Z.
barretti Cart. var. *basalis* Cart.
46. *maculatus* Cart.
47. *minor* C. & Z.
48. *minutus* C. & Z.
49. *quadriplagiatus* Cart.
50. *setosus* C. & Z.
51. *simsoni* Grouv.
52. *subplanatus* C. & Z.
var. *C.* & Z.
53. *taylori* C. & Z.
54. *tropicus* C. & Z.
55. *victoriae* C. & Z.

l.c. 1894, p.94. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1936, p.158.
l.c. 1929, p. 60.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.64. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.63.
Genotype. *N. (Elmis) quadriplagiatus* Cart.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.507. (*Elmis*).
l.c. p.506. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1936, p.156.
l.c. 1929, p.64.
l.c. p.65.
l.c.

N.S.W.
S.Q., N.S.W.
N.S.W.
N.S.W.
N.S.W.
N.S.W.
N.S.W.

COXELMIS C. & Z.

56. *novemnotata* King.
57. *trinotata* C. & Z.
58. *v-fasciata* Lea.
var.— C. & Z.

Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.507. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1932, p.204.
l.c. 1938, p.171.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1926, p.63. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1936, p.156.
Not. Leyd. Mus. 1896, p.49. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.66.
l.c. 1938, p.172.
l.c. 1936, p.157.
l.c. 1938, p.171.
l.c. 1929, p.66.

N.S.W.
N.S.W.
N.Q.
N.S.W., V. T.
N.S.W.
N.S.W., V.
N.Q.
N.Q.
N.Q.
N.S.W., V.

STETHOLUS C. & Z.

59. *elongatus* C. & Z.
60. *laticeps* C. & Z.

Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.52.
Genotype. *C. (Elmis) novemnotata* King.
Trans. Ent. Soc. N.S.W. 1865, p.159. (*Elmis*).
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.67.
Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W. 1894, p.590.
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.68.
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.52.
Genotype. *Stetholus elongatus* C. & Z.
Aust. Zoologist, 1929, p.53.
l.c. 1932, p.202.

N.S.W., V.
N.S.W.
S.Q., N.S.W.
N.S.W.

N.Q., N.S.W.
N.S.W.

Scrubby regions border the river in places and in these thrives the common scrub or bush turkey, *Alectura lathamii*, some of the flocks which we disturbed numbering up to a dozen or more. Such prolificness is snort of understandable in view of the large numbers of wild pigs which frequent the river, the buried eggs of the megapod usually providing a feast for them.

The tussles with these herds of pigs provided some of the more exciting moments there. An omnivorous scavenger, the pig has come to be regarded in many places as a pest, yet his numbers are increasing rapidly. All of our party being enthusiastic riflemen, the opportunity was there for a little practical shooting. I can recall one occasion in particular when two of the party were treed by a wounded boar with a rather unreasonable temperament, an incident which the others found extremely amusing at the time, indicating an infantile sense of humour.

Bad luck and inconvenience marked the greater part of our tour. At this stage we had lost all our spare tyres through blow-outs, the result of too much travel too fast during the hotter hours of the day. The trip from here to Cape York and back was subsequently made without a spare, as tyres were an unobtainable item in that country. So with travel restricted to early morning and late afternoon and a time limit placed on the journey, we usually rose at an early hour. Both the senior Mr. Veivers and Charlie, who had the ruling votes, saw little amiss in dispensing with breakfast entirely in order to obtain an immediate start, but it was only under protest that Ted and I complied with the custom. Subsequently it was not unusual for "breakfast" to be eaten at about midday.

With repairs effected temporarily to the utility at the St. George, we resumed travel and covered the route to Fairview Post Office with only brief halts to disturb the numbers of wild pigs which were gathered at the waterholes along the way. From Fairview, a branch telegraph line and road run east to Laura, head of the Cooktown railway. It was rumoured at the time that the Fairview Telegraph Station would shortly be moved to Cooktown, an event which in its fulfilment would remove yet another centre of civilisation from an already sparsely populated country. Such centres as these telegraph offices may appear "large" upon a map; actually they are each

merely country clusters of buildings accommodating the "staff" and family.

Beyond Fairview the overland telegraph line begins to make impression on the mind with its trying monotony. Ever it stretches, mile upon mile of it, seemingly endless, with the road deviating from its route only around impassable country. But the linesmen of the telegraph offices, necessarily hardened bushmen, must tend and care for every foot of it, keeping down in the twenty yard easement the growth which follows the wet, repairing the inevitable breaks, ensuring that the slender wires remain serviceable.

Everywhere one goes in the wide outback areas of Australia, one is struck with the same thought. Here is a big land and its people are big accordingly.

We found no water at the Kennedy crossing and pushed directly on to the Hann River. The Kennedy, like so many of the rivers of the lower peninsula, flows only during the period of the brief wet. In the dry months, water holes in the broad, sandy bed are few and far between. But the wet, though brief, is torrential and calls a halt to all road communications for some time, bridges over streams being non-existent.

The small but perennial Hann was a welcome change from the monotony of dry rivers, and the camp there was of the more enjoyable of the journey.

Game was plentiful in the lagoons and provided relief from the hardness of a canned and salted meat diet. Though fish were not plentiful in the stream we had evidence of a type of swamp giant sea perch, *Lates calcarifer*, here called "barramundi," which could be found there. But our modern tackle and fishing skill proved insufficient to cope with the wiles and we failed to land one. Fish was not entered on our menu till a later date on the tour.

A feature of the Hann is the occurrence of the saltwater crocodiles there, *Crocodilus porosus*, they having penetrated so far up fresh flowing water from the sea. The deep, dark pools provide suitable haunts for the saurians and are suggestive of their presence.

In expeditions along the stream, we found sundry strange and interesting relics of the past, axes and implements of early settlers and prospectors, an old muzzle-loading rifle, and in a secluded spot upstream a pair of old and rusted levers with the manacles riveted in

place. They were tokens of an age not yet long gone.

I liked the Hann River and all its

associations. It is one of the delightful spots in the big peninsula.

(To be continued)

North Queensland Naturalists' Club

Meets at School of Arts, Lake Street, Cairns, on second Tuesday in each month, at 8 p.m.

MEETINGS:

10th Oct., 1950.

14th Nov.: Address by Mr. Cantrill on "Astronomy."

12th Dec.: Address by Dr. H. Flecker on the "Wannakai" (finger cherry).

9th Jan., 1951: Address by the President, Mr. A. Read, on Biological Nomenclature.

13th Mar.: Lecture by Dr. H. Flecker on Mollusca.

10th Apr.: Lecture by Mr. George Wilson, of Meringa Experimental Station, on Scientific Aspects of the Sugar Industry.

8th May: Impromptu Lecture by Mr. D. R. Peiniger, on Bird Habits.

NEW MEMBERS ELECTED

13th June, 1950. Miss Price, Bungalow, Mrs. Price, Bungalow, R. M. Smyth, 91 Esplanade, Cairns.

10th Oct., 1950: Dr. K. McL. Benn, Base Hospital Cairns.

9th Nov.: Mr. Arnold Johnson, Cane Pests Board, Hambleton.

8th Feb., 1951: Messrs H. F. Ziegenfusz, Cairns Rd., Gordonvale. S. G. Butler, P.O. Cairns.

13th Mar.: Miss R. Burkitt, 137 Lake Street, Cairns.

10th Apr.: Mrs. Berkeley Cook, Kuranda Barracks, Cairns.

8th May: Mr. Geoffrey Higham, 17 Rose Street, West Cairns.

Townsville and District Naturalists' Club

Lectures and Field Days

The Club meets on the first Friday of each month in the Adult Education Centre Lecture Room, Wickham Street, Townsville.

President, Mr. K. Kennedy, Esplanade and Rose Streets, Kissing Point, Townsville. Hon. Secretary, Elizabeth Kennedy, Box 178, Townsville.

February Meeting. The meeting took the form of a members' night. Miss N. Hopkins described the birds observed at Beach Creek (Three Mile) and read a list of birds observed by Mrs. Hopkins during the Club's last field day. Mr. J. J. Selvage, who has just returned from a trip out west, told of his observations of bird life on the sand ridges near Prairie. Mr. R. Sleigh spoke of local aboriginal relics, and Mr. Cassidy gave a talk on sun spots and their influence on the earth.

The field day was to Pallarenda.

March Meeting. The lecture was given by Owen Maloney who spoke on Tasmania. The lecturer told of the hydro-electric works of the lake country, the cement industry, paper industry, mining, forests and fisheries. Photographs taken by Mr. and Mrs. Maloney illustrated the various points of the lecture.

Miss N. Hopkins then spoke of the birds inhabiting the land near Heatleys Parade, which is shortly to be subdivided into a suburb, and Mr. K. Kennedy exhibited a burl obtained from the butt of a tree, *Melaleuca cunninghamii*, in the same locality.

The field day was to Heatleys Parade.

April Meeting. Mr. S. Brock gave the talk describing his visit as a naturalist to Gladstone, Maryborough and Rockhampton and their hinterland. He spoke of the various kinds of forests in the different districts, and the insects, birds and shells he observed. He also drew attention to the silting of the rivers and creeks, due to soil erosion. His exhibits included some of the celebrated kookaburra shells from Gladstone, a strombus shell from New Guinea, a maori adze, some fossilized wood from New Zealand and a unique "death's head" orchid in flower. The latter has the property of being able to eject to a fair distance pollen masses when the column is touched. During the evening a list of birds and butterflies observed at Hughenden during March by Mr. L. R. Black was read.

The field day was to the top of Mt. Cutheringa, or Castle Hill.

May Meeting. Mr. J. J. Selvage gave the lecture on Bower Birds, which he said are unique in that they are the only birds known to scientists that build a bower or playground. From his observations Mr. Selvage said that it takes about six months for the birds to build a bower, which is rebuilt every year, parts of the old bower being used for the new one. In the school ground at Stuart there is a bower that has been occupied and re-built every year.

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since 1927, but whether by the same pair of birds he did not know. In contrast to the bower, which is essentially a playground, the nest built by the bower birds is very flimsy. Their food consists of wild fruits, such as berries.

Mr. L. R. Black's monthly report on butterflies, birds and snakes was read and discussed.

ELIZABETH KENNEDY,

Hon. Secretary.

PUBLICATIONS

- No. 1. Check List of North Queensland Orchids. Price 1/-.
- No. 2. Marketable Fish of the Cairns area. Price 1/-.
- No. 3. Check List of North Queensland Ferns. Price 1/-.
- No. 4. List of Edible Fruits of North Queensland. Price 2/-.
- No. 5. List of Birds Occuring in North Queensland. Price 2/-.

