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NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALISTS' CLUB

Meets at Girls' and Infants' School, Abbott Street, Cairns,
usually on second Monday in each month, at 8 p.m.

BUSINESS FOR NEXT MEETING, Monday, 13th September, 1937.

Fifth Annual General Meeting. Election of Officers. Annual Report, Etc.
Annual Address: "Vernacular and Biological Nomenclature."

REPORTS OF MEETINGS:

14th June, 1937.

New members elected:

Miss Elizabeth Henry, "Bellenden,"
Murray River, Tully.

Mr. Springall, Tait River.

Mr. E. W. Priest addressed the meeting and described the different features of a trip through the interior of North Queensland, illustrating his lecture with photographs.

Exhibits.

Giant Fish Killer (*Lethocerus indicus*)—Mr. F. R. Morris.

Bug (*Tectocoris lineola*)—Mrs. Dalziel, Atherton.

Spider (*Nephila maculata*). Web capable of entangling small birds—R. Birch.

12th July, 1937.

New member elected: Mr. Louis H. Jezard, Proserpine.

A very well-attended meeting was held to hear Mr Tom Marshall's address on Fish, which was illustrated by lantern slides. A feature of special interest was the particularly fine water

colour drawings of a considerable number of fish, made by the lecturer during a visit to Palm Island the previous week, all drawn from living specimens. These will be published in due course.

Attention was drawn to the destruction of a cassowary in the Mossman Gorge, which is a sanctuary for all native animals, also to the use of bandicoots as prey in the training of dogs for coursing. Steps were taken to limit these practices.

9th August, 1937.

Mr. A. F. Basset-Hull addressed the meeting and traced the history of the Taronga Park Zoological Gardens from the time the collection was removed from Moore Park and gave a lucid account of the rapid improvement in all directions and particularly in finance resulting from the change. In addition, some interesting remarks on various petrels and other birds were made.

An appeal was made by Mr. B. O. Balfe to endeavour to secure the protection of the koala in this state for all time.

The unsatisfactory treatment of tourists to Green Island was expressed and it was resolved that steps be taken to advise all tourists that the most satisfactory way to see the reef was to walk over it at low tide, and to be prepared to do so.

Exhibit.

Frog Fish (*Pseudobatrachus dubius*). Mistaken for Stone Fish.

Caterpillar of *Eriboea pyrthus sempronius*—Miss E. Henry, Tully.

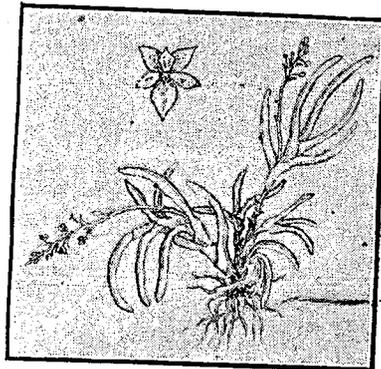
FIFTH ANNUAL WILD NATURE SHOW. This will be held at the City Baths, Cairns, on 3rd and 4th September next. For the first time, arrangements are being made for the exhibition of native flowers from the southern states.

A DIMINUTIVE NORTH QUEENSLAND ORCHID.

OBERONIA PUSILLA, Bail.

By the Rev. H. M. R. RUPP

So far as I am aware, this little orchid has not previously been figured. A plant was sent to me in September, 1935, by Dr. H. Flecker, who collected it from Malaan Road, near Ravenshoe, on the Atherton Tableland. The plant has done very well under ordinary bush-house conditions at Raymond Terrace, N.S.W., and the accompanying sketch depicts it as it is two years after it left North Queensland. It is (at the present time) growing on a *Banksia* stick. It has a branching habit, and is very unlike either *O. iridifolia* or *O. Titania*, but the floral structure is almost identical with that of the former, except that the perianth segments are entire. The leaves are semi-cylindrical and succulent. The raceme is comparatively short and few-flowered, not hanging down in a long, densely-flowered spike as in our two other Australian species. F. M. Bailey's specimens were obtained at an altitude of 4,000 feet on Bellenden Ker. He does not mention the branching habit, and the plants seen by him were apparently younger and smaller than Dr. Flecker's.



OBERONIA PUSILLA, Bail.

A plant, natural size, and an enlarged flower (front view).

NOTE.—This orchid was found in the jungle, densely distributed over the branches at the top of a fallen tree, on which were also found *Bulbophyllum Macphersonii*, Rupp, and flowering specimens of *Cleisostoma tridentatum*, Lindl., the latter being the only examples of this species yet recorded from North Queensland.

—H.F.

THE RAMBLINGS OF A NATURALIST.

By J. G. BROOKS, B.D.Sc.

It is hoped that these items, though of not great scientific value, will prove of interest to the readers. An endeavour has been made to cover a number of branches of Natural History.

Collecting Natural History Specimens

Most people who adopt Natural History as a hobby collect large and pretty specimens, which is not a good idea, from a scientific point of view. Large specimens are easily set and handled and present a good appearance, but in a short time, available space for storage is soon taxed. As an example, not very many Hercules moths can be placed in a glass case, whereas thousands of ants could be placed in the same sized glass case.

Many of the minute specimens are more handsome than the larger ones but unfortunately have to be viewed through a microscope. To obtain and classify specimens new to science, one has to collect the small-sized specimens. They take longer to find, set and classify, but do not take much storage space and when arranged surpass the large-sized specimens for beauty.

Set-backs to the Collector.

Collectors in a climate such as that of Cairns are doomed to many disappointments with their collections. The hot, damp climate is ideal for fungus growth and one has to be continually cleaning specimens of fungus (mildew). This is comparatively easy on the plain, smooth types but those with the powdery types of coating are greatly damaged. Equal parts of carbolic acid and alcohol destroy the fungus. Thymol is suggested for cabinets but the writer has had no success with it. A little research work on this set-back will be appreciated by many collectors.

Another cause for much alarm is insect pests, particularly the museum beetle *Anthrenus varius* Lea, Family Dermestidae, which, if not controlled, will destroy the bodies of numerous specimens in quick time. The Psocids (Book-lice) also do much damage in collections, though their damage is confined to the hairs, etc., on the specimens.

Napthalene has been a favourite for prevention of insect pests, but it is not efficient unless the cabinet is perfectly air-tight, which is practically an impossibility in a damp, hot climate. Paradichlor-benzene has proved to be the best insecticide that the writer has tried, although a mixture of napthalene, paradichlor-benzene and thymol boiled together and set in blocks is recommended.

Fruit Fly Collecting and Breeding.

A collector is more successful in obtaining delicate specimens by breeding than by collecting them with a net. At the same time he obtains a greater variety of specimens by the former method.

Fruit-flies (*Trypetidae*) are delicate specimens which are a menace to both cultivated and native fruits. A well-represented collection can be obtained by gathering infected fruits and breeding the flies from them. The greater the variety of fruits, the greater is the variety of fruit flies.

The fruits are best stored in glass jars. It is advisable to place sawdust on the bottom of the containers to absorb the moisture which results from the fermentation of the fruits during the process. The jars should be covered with cheese-cloth; this permits the circulation of air, but prevents the specimens from escaping.

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Fruit Bats—Method of Drinking.

Whilst sitting on the bank of the Babinda Creek at Happy Valley one evening, I had the pleasure of observing numerous fruit-eating bats (flying foxes) drinking.

The type was Gould's Fruit Bat (*Pteropus gouldi*, Peters)—the common, brown and black species of North Queensland.

The bats were flying up the creek and at a shallow part of the creek they dipped and dragged their tongues along the surface of the water for a few yards. The process created a hissing noise as if something was tearing and left small ripples which were soon swallowed by the onward flowing stream.

Female Supremacy.

When dragging ponds and creeks for aquatic insects, one finds many interesting specimens, amongst them are the water-bugs—*Spheroderma rusticum* Fabr., Family Belostomatidae. They belong to the same family as the Giant Fish Killer (*Lethocerus indicus* Stal.) but are much smaller, being about an inch in length and three-quarters of an inch broad and fairly flat. Some of the specimens will be found to have their backs covered with eggs—these are the males.

When a female is ready to deposit her eggs, she seizes the male and firmly attaches the eggs to his back thereby sealing his wings together. This makes the male a prisoner to the particular pond in which he is, whereas the female is free to leave the water and fly where she chooses. When the young hatch, the male has to rub the egg shells from his back, and until successful, is a prisoner.

The Dyeing of Ferns.

When ferns are dried and pressed, they usually fade. Their colour can be retained by a simple process, which is as follows:

Make a saturated solution of copper acetate and glacial acetic acid, add two or three parts of water to one part of the solution. The ferns are then boiled in the solution until the desired colour is obtained.

During the boiling the ferns first lose their colour, due to the loss of the chlorophyll, but then the copper acetate replaces it and the fern can be returned to any desired shade of green.

Dunk Island.

To the writer, Dunk Island is a gem in the reef-studded Pacific Ocean. Most of the island is still in its virgin state, although a small part has been cleared with the advance of land development. Not very much success resulted from an insect-collecting point of view, although a number of specimens were taken around the electric lights of a night-time. Marine water-striders, bugs of the family Gerridae were common, particularly about the fish trap.

The spear and woomera proved an efficient means of obtaining fish for bait, and in the hands of the aboriginal residing at the island, was a deadly weapon.

What appealed to the writer most, was the verse on the grave of the Beachcomber (the late E. J. Banfield) and this should be a fitting place to quote it as it may help to explain the oddness generally applied to Naturalists.

Edmund James Banfield
(The Beachcomber)

Born Liverpool, England, 4th Sept.,
1852

Died Dunk Island, 2nd June, 1923.

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions,
Perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer;
Let him step to the music which he hears."