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The North Queensland Naturalist

The Journal and Magazine of the North Queensland Naturalists' Club

Vol. XVI

CAIRNS, 1st JUNE, 1949

No. 91

TWO STONE ARTIFACTS FROM NORTH QUEENSLAND

By KEITH KENNEDY, Curator, Museum of Music, Townsville

STONE ARTIFACTS FROM N.Q.



ABOVE: Stained Igneous Rock

BELOW: Heavy Igneous Rock

The above illustration shows two uncommon stone artifacts from North Queensland. The smaller, No. 1, is made from an iron stained igneous rock and weighs 8½ ozs. Its base measures 18 cms. from point to point, with a width of 2½ cms. at the centre. The knob or handle measures 6½ cms. from the base on one side, and 7 cms. from the base on the other side, so the plane of the base is at a slight angle.

It was found by Mr. C. Freeman

of Townsville, during January, 1949, at a depth of 18 ins., while putting down a post hole at Miriwini on the railway line, five miles south of Babinda. With it was a hammer stone and a large anvil stone. The latter he was unable to remove.

Mr. Freeman, on presenting his find to the above Museum, mentioned that at times he had seen similar artifacts, and said that they were used by the aborigines for smoothing their wooden implements, such as their large wooden swords. The mode of procedure was to place a little sand and water on the wooden surface to be treated, and, grasping the tool by the knob, to rub until all irregularities were smoothed off. This explanation of their use seems to be borne out by the fact that the bases of both artifacts in the illustration are polished and shiny, as if they had been ground against some hard object. These bases are also marked with minute striations, which lie in the direction of the width, indicating that they had been made by rubbing the implement sideways.

The larger implement, No. 2, belongs to Mr. J. Popham, of Townsville, and was given to him by Mr. S. Fowler of Townsville, who obtained it from the Herbert River district. It weighs 12 ozs. and is also made from a heavy igneous rock. The base measures 13 cms. from point to point, but unfortunately, one end has been broken off, so it was originally longer. Width of base at the centre is 2 cms. The knob or handle is set at an angle of 70 degrees, and measures 12½ cms. from the base on one side, and 13 cms. from the base at the other side, so the plane of the base is also at a slight angle.

This kind of artifact seems to be rare, and is probably peculiar only to the North Queensland aborigines, so any additional information regarding its use and distribution would be welcomed.

RARE BIRDS IN THE TOWNSVILLE DISTRICT

Ornithologists appear to have done little field work in the Townsville district, with the result that our bird books understate the range of several species known here. Thus Neville Cayley quotes Cardwell as the southern limit of birds actually present in this or the Mt. Spec district, e.g., the Shining Flycatcher (*Piezorhynchus alecto*) and Cassowary (*Casuarus casuarus*), while other Mt. Spec birds, the Tooth-billed Bower bird (*Scenopetes dentirostris*) and Northern Chowchilla (*Orthonyx spaldingi*) are attributed by him to the Cairns district only.

More surprisingly, the White-gaped Honey-eater (*Stomiopera unicolor*), one of our most constant garden visitors, is quoted by him as extending "from Fitzroy River in the north-west to the Leichhardt River in Queensland". This honeyeater is not common in the surrounding bush, and does not appear to have spread far along the coast. It would appear that it has penetrated to this area through north-west Queensland.

Dry weather visitors from inland are not uncommon, and include the Diamond Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*), Red-backed Kingfisher (*Haleyon pyrrhopygius*) and Cockatleel (*Leptolophus hollandicus*) which last has been observed nesting at Stuart. Most fascinating is the Australian Pratincole (*Stilia isabella*), which appears when the marshes of the Common are reduced to dry plain, and disappears with the rains. I have not been able to learn much about the Pratincole's migrations, but it seems likely that it also comes from the west. Some birds books expressly exclude the east coast area from its range.

In 1938 I found a pair nesting on the Common. A colony of Pratincoles spreads itself over a large area, and each pair seems to have its own territory. This fact enabled me to observe in a series of visits the progress of the one young bird, which, though it could run from birth, grew to maturity in the same half-acre. The parent birds invariably presented a marvellous display of decoy tactics. I concluded that no other birds were breeding, as my presence provoked no such response from other members of the colony, though I spent much time among them that year. They are interesting birds to watch. Although most of their time is spent

on the ground, they are often seen flying high in pursuit of insects, so that they are aptly described as Swallow Plovers.

The Pied Heron (*Notophox arvensis*) officially recorded from the North Australian coast, Wyndham to Cape York, makes rare appearances on the Townsville Common. I saw my first bird there in March 1938. In March 1941, three birds were in the same locality for a week, and in May 1945, I observed, again in the same area, what I assumed to be an immature pied heron, as it could not be identified as any other species. Its size, form and colouration were those of the Pied Heron, but its plumage was dull instead of glossy, and it lacked the head plumes. Standing in shallow water, it scratched the mud with one foot, as the Little Egret sometimes does. If it was indeed a young Pied Heron, one wonders whether it was actually bred here. Possibly however, it takes longer than one season for the young to attain adult plumage. From our few glimpses, it would seem to be merely a stray caller down our coast.

Another rare bird recorded on the Common is the Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*). Though its range is wide, recorded appearances in Australia have been very rare, and I had never seen it until the summer of 1947-48. During that summer a flock of about twenty remained in the vicinity of the Common for a few months. Mr. Brock, of the Townsville Naturalists' Club, and myself observed them on several occasions and had ample opportunity of studying their distinctive markings which leave no doubt as to identity.

Until recent years we looked upon the Lotus-bird (*Irediparra gallinacea*) as a rare bird. Fifteen years ago I caught a glimpse of one on the big lagoon at Belgian Gardens, and on the following Sunday I tramped all around the lagoon looking vainly for another. Now there are red-crested lotus-birds scattered about the lagoons, and walking the lily leaves as long as the water lasts. Quaint, large-footed baby birds, though less conspicuous, are quite common. Protection of bird life on the Common and the damming of lagoons, have created a perfect breeding ground, and I am happy to say that this lovely bird is no longer rare.

NANCY HOPKINS.

ABORIGINAL MILLSTONES OR GRINDING STONES—DUCHESS DISTRICT

By RODERICK LE ROSSIGNOL

Oloncurry is in the heart of the Kalkadoon territory, Duchess, situated from it approximately eight miles south west by road, is close to areas containing some very well preserved relics of this much-famed tribe of aborigines.

Recently a short period was spent in the Duchess district, during mineralogical investigations, consequently some interesting traces of tribal aborigines were observed and collected, those to be now described consisting of two grinders, slab portions only, and lately forwarded to the North Queensland Naturalists' Club as additions to the excellent collection of ethnological artifacts already in their possession.

Both implements are, of course, the lower grinders, or nether-stones, and strangely enough, each is incomplete insofar that the extreme two or three inches of stone at one end were almost squarely broken across, the fragments therefrom being lost to our collecting.

Roughly oval in shape and approximately of equal dimensions, they measure overall:—36.0 plus and 33.0 plus cm. in length, 22.5 and 22.0 cm. width and 3.1 and 3.3 cm. thick respectively. Being imperfect they were originally of somewhat greater length. Each is fairly uniformly flat with crudely hollowed longitudinal depressions worn during the process of grinding food materials. These depressions varying between 7.0 and 10.0 cm. in width, were parallel to the longer dimensions, somewhat to one side of the utensil and occupying less than one half of the total width.

The stone in each case appears to be quartzite, or a dense sandstone,

with one implement having a thin band of white quartz, less than one half an inch wide, traversing the shorter dimension at approximately one third the distance from one end.

These grinders were found in association with several other artifacts, and in the perimeter of an erstwhile corroboree ground, a flat level area entirely swept of all stones and obstacles to leave a cleared circular space of approximately thirty feet in diameter. The debris, mostly quartz fragments, formed a low peripheral ridge, not more than three or four inches high.

Several small mounds of quartz fragments, not exceeding eighteen inches in diameter and some eight inches high, were observed twenty yards away from the perimeter of the corroboree area—their significance if any, could not be determined.

Within the cleared circle, but placed eccentrically, were the remains of a fire. Much fragmented charcoal, small stones and fine powdery ash were found beneath the surface, also a few bones of what was probably a bird or small mammal.

The disposition of this corroboree area was interesting, being within half a mile from what must have been a series of permanent water-holes, and placed within 300 yards from where the watercourse took an encircling series of bends between fairly high banks. The surrounding landscape was gently undulating before giving way to abruptly steep hills at the east and south, low lying for some distance elsewhere. The whole region was very scantily vegetated, trees, being mostly stunted and sparse.

TOWNSVILLE AND DISTRICT NATURALISTS' CLUB

President: K. Kennedy, Esplanade and Rose St., Kissing Point
Hon. Secretary: Elizabeth Kennedy, P.O. Box 178, Townsville
The Club meets usually on the first Friday of the month.
Meetings held, at Adult Education Centre Lecture Hall.

MARCH MEETING

Mr. S. Brock gave an account of his visit to Cooktown just before the cyclone, when he went there to secure specimens of Coleoptera. He described the geophysical aspect of the surrounding country, and gave a list of the birds he observed during his stay. There were not many epiphytic orchids to be seen, as the vicinity of Cooktown has been depleted by collectors, and of the well known Cooktown

orchid (*D. phalaenopsis*), only small specimens remain. Numbers of a terrestrial orchid (*Dipodium punctatum*) were observed, including a variety *alba*. Of the Coleoptera, or beetles which were gathered, some beautiful iridescent specimens were exhibited by the lecturer.

MARCH FIELD DAY

March Field Day was to Althuse Creek, south of Bluewater.

APRIL MEETING

Mr. Kennedy spoke on Fiji and the Fijians. He gave a brief talk on Fijian culture, ancient religion and history, then followed some coloured lantern slides from photographs taken by the lecturer, when on a scientific expedition to some of the lesser known islands. These showed Bau, the old capital, where once Thakambau ruled, canoe sailing, coconut milk making, native agriculture, lall (drum) beating, tenga throwing, fire making cooking wakalolo pudding, and finished with scenes of a yangona or kava ceremony on Vanua Levu. The stage was decked with many objects of Fijian art, including a beautiful piece of Gnatu or tappa cloth, pandanus leaf matting, a tambua, a carved head rest, kava bowl, various kinds of cluts, etc. The lecturer explained the manufacture and use of the exhibits and related many stories and legends of Fijian folk lore. He also described his visit to the pool of the ura mbuta, near Naweni, where, on special occasions, the sacred red crayfish come out and swim around when the Fijians sing to them.

APRIL FIELD DAY

The April Field Day was to the Town Common where many birds were observed. The day was made memorable by the fact that a Lotus-bird's nest (*Irediparra gallinacea*),

with four brownish eggs covered with black lines, was found quite close to the edge of one of the lagoons, in easy view of the members, some of whom took pictures. Other birds observed were: swamp hen, stilts, egret, broilga, magpiegoose, and others.

MAY LECTURE

Mr. Owen Maloney gave his lecture on his experiences in New Zealand. He told of a Maori feast, and of Maori customs, also of the methods they use in cooking their food in earth ovens, with heated stones which are laid on top of, and underneath the food, which has been wrapped in flax mats and carefully covered over to prevent dirt and ashes getting into the food. He spoke of the native sport of hurdle races in canoes. The scenery of New Zealand was described as well as the bird life, and the lecturer told of how he tried to make friends with a kiwi.

MAY FIELD DAY

The May Field Day was to the Town Common swamps near the Aerodrome. Birds observed included: Rainbow Bird, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike, Broilga, White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, White-necked Heron, White fronted Heron, Magpie Goose, Masked Plover, Lotus Bird, Egret, White Cockatoos. Also some specimens of *Marsilia hirsuta* were collected.

NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALISTS' CLUB

President: J. M. Gray, Spence St., Cairns.

Hon. Secretary: J. Wyer, "Lochinvar," 253 Sheridan St., Cairns.

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

MEETINGS

Tuesday, 8th March. Address by Mrs. H. Morley, Ex-President Swansea, Naturalists' Society, South Wales, "Far Afield with the Naturalists in Merrie England".

27th March. Field Excursion to Palm Beach.

12th April. Owing to exceptionally stormy weather, meeting lapsed for want of quorum. Messrs. Roy Mackay, Kevin Budden and Neville Goddard from Sydney en route to Coen in quest of reptiles gave an informal address.

10th May. Address by Mr. J. H. Holliday on "Ants."

NEW MEMBERS ELECTED

3th March. P. J. Courtney, 66 Cairns Street, Cairns; Daniel R. Peiniger, Edward Street, Cairns; W. T. Chandler, Cooktown; G. M. Storr; 22 Commercial Road, Hyde Park, S.A.;

8th March. Mrs. H. Morley, 141 Martyn Street, Cairns; Mrs. Vlasoff, Abbott Street, Cairns;

10th May. C. H. Sanders, 109 Sheridan Street, Cairns; Howard Burns, Miles Street, West Cairns; Miss M. F. Crommelin, Pearl Beach, via Woy Woy, N.S.W.

Junior Member. John Stapleton, 185 McLeod Street, Cairns.

WEEK-END EXCURSION TO CHILLAGOE AND MUNGANA
 Special Rail Motor leaves Cairns 11th June, returning 13th June

PUBLICATIONS BY N.Q. NATURALISTS' CLUB

1. Check List of North Queensland Orchids. Price 1/-.
2. Marketable Fish of the Cairns Area. Price 1/-.
3. Check List of North Queensland Ferns. Price 1/-.
4. Edible Plants in North Queensland. Price 2/-.
5. List of Birds occurring in North Queensland. Price 2/-.