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CANOES OF MANUS ISLAND, ADMIRALTY GROUP

By MAURICE F. LEASK, Ballarat.

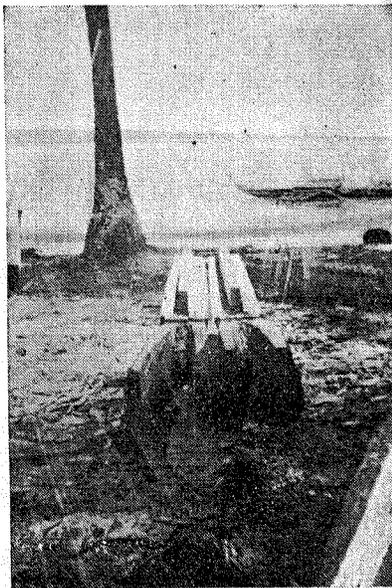
The natives inhabiting the main island of MANUS and adjacent islets of the ADMIRALTY GROUP are renowned as skilled builders and as expert sailors of their unique outrigger canoes.

The green log was hollowed out by cutting and chipping with hatchets and improvised adzes—in these days steel tools are used, some of the adzes being mounted plane blades.

On PITYILU ISLAND in the north-centre of the ADMIRALTY ISLANDS, a magnificent canoe has been completed quite recently from a huge log obtained in the MALAI BAY area, at a distance approaching fifty miles away to the south-west.



The green log was hollowed out.
Photo by R. Sheridan.



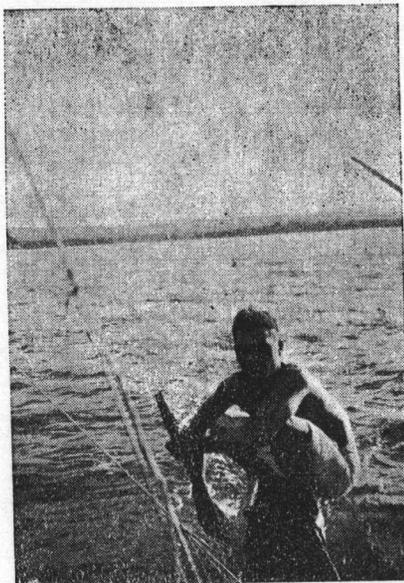
Two "porets" were shaped separately.
Photo by R. Sheridan.

Two "porets," bow and stern, were shaped separately. These had to be fitted to the ends of the hull and fastened with "kasta," a native putty made by grating the kernel of a nut. Kasta nuts are as large as a goose's eggs, and are found under their tall trees in the jungle.

Later, a solid piece of wood was hewn out, approximating to the shape of a "kanu" (canoe) hull and attached to spars usually numbering four. The illustration shows how these spars ride above the water by their being lashed to "limbongs" (betel-nut strips) hammered into this outrigger.

Canoes around MANUS carry one, two or three sails; emergency power is supplied by paddles of which there are as many as ten in the largest craft. However, the method of using the paddles is unique, for the crew row with them, fastening the shafts in rowlocks of "kanda" (lawyer-cane).

When the canoe is travelling by sail or paddle the man on the "sitea" holds an important post. Perched in the extreme stern, he manipulates a one-piece, long-bladed paddle by prizing it against the side of the vessel.



He manipulates a long-bladed paddle.
Photo by R. Sheridan.

"SAK-SAK": MANUFACTURE OF SAGO FOR FOOD, MANUS ISLAND

By MAURICE F. LEASK

"Mi no gat lik-lik kai-kai!" an entreaty often heard among native people, means very often that the men have no "sak-sak" in particular, for sago is one of the principal articles of diet eaten on Manus Island and its smaller, surrounding islands of the ADMIRALTIES. This district is one of the most northerly in the Trusteeship Territory of New Guinea.

The sago-palm (just "sak-sak") grows abundantly along the estuaries and in the coastal swamps of the largest island,

Manus, particularly around the LAUIS RIVER in the east, the WARI RIVER in the south-east, the MALAI BAY area in the far south-west, and BOWAT BAY on the north-central coast.

In many cases, after the tree is felled, the trunk is floated downstream to a spot handy to the village before the food is manufactured from it.

Then the outer bark is split and prized partly off with poles, but is retained as a trough by numerous stakes fixed in the ground to support it.

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The outer bark is prized off with poles.
Photo by R. Sheridan.

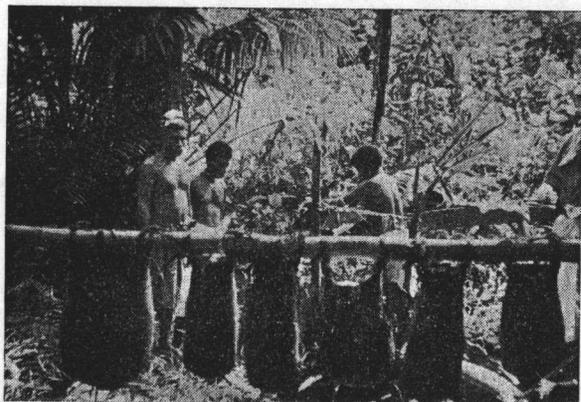
To loosen the fibres of the massive "pith," two men "fait" (strike) it with bows. These are permanent implements kept in the huts to be brought out for the purpose of food manufacture.



Two men strike the pith with bows.
Photo by R. Sheridan.

After the fibre is well broken, the pith is washed in a trough and is run into net bags which are hung on a pole to drain. These, too, are permanent articles made and kept aside for this specific use.

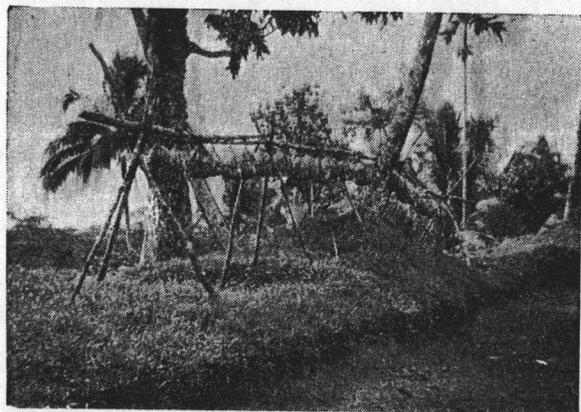
The illustration shows students of the AREA SCHOOL, LUNDRET, in the hills of MANUS ISLAND, at work on the outskirts of LUNDRET, VILLAGE, making food from a tree presented to the school.



Net bags are hung on a pole to drain.

Photo by R. Sheridan.

In its solidified state the "sak-sak" can be removed by turning the net bag inside out. For final drying, each mass is bundled in a "makfas" of leaves from the sago-palm, and these parcels are hung on poles in the sun, in readiness for transport or sale, or for display, prior to some "sing-sing" or other ceremony.



These parcels are hung on poles in the sun.

Photo by R. Sheridan.

AN ABORIGINAL IMPLEMENT OF SPORT

By KEITH KENNEDY, Museum of Music, Townsville.

Like most sections of the human race, the aborigines of Australia had their sports and games. The illustration below shows a cross-shaped implement, which, in parts of North Queensland, was thrown for sport. The wood (*Ficus ehretioides* F. Muell.) from which the cross is made is soft and light, the implement weighing only three ounces. Each strip of the cross measures 44 cm. in length, width at the centre $4\frac{1}{2}$ cm., and thickness of each piece at centre, 14 mm.

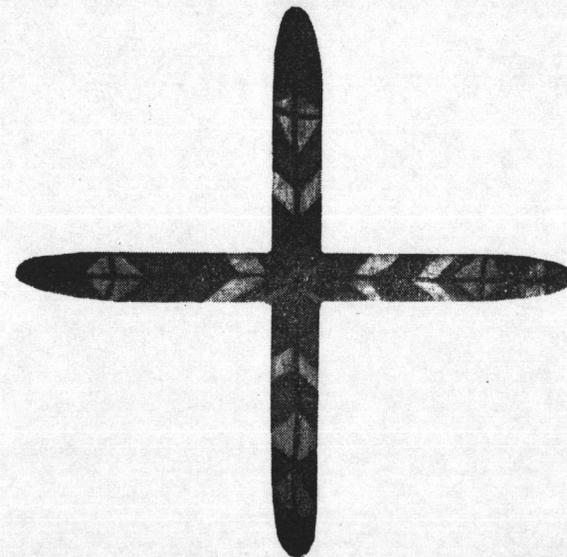
The lengths of wood are slightly convex on each surface, and are pierced in the centre so that they can be bound together, but the original binding of *Calamus* palm strips are missing. When placed on a flat surface it can be seen that each point of the cross viewed from the end, has a slight upwards slant to the left. The ornamentation is drawn on the upper surfaces only, with lines of red and the spaces filled in with black, white and yellow pigment.

The implement is thrown for sport only, and when hurled into the air returns like a boomerang. I have not thrown this particular specimen because of the risk of a breakage, but a model which I made returns quite easily.

The exact locality from which it came seems to be unknown. All I know about its history is that about fifty years ago, a Mr. Grant, who was then connected with the Australian Museum, Sydney, paid a visit to the Cairns hinterland, and brought it back amongst other examples of aboriginal workmanship.

According to Roth (N.Q. Ethnography, Bull. 4, 1902), who calls it a cross, the Mallanpara blacks of the Tully district call it the *pirbu-pirbu*. He mentions that it is used by men and boys only, and thrown in two ways. In the first, it is thrown directly into the air like an ordinary boomerang, but its flight is more circular than that of the boomerang, and it finishes with a double circle around the thrower. In the second way it is thrown to the ground directly in front of the performer, from whence it curves either to the right or to the left.

This kind of sport implement has only been recorded from North Queensland and only from the coastal and rain forest country between Cardwell and the Mossman River.



IN AND AROUND MY GARDEN

By DOREEN BARKUS

Now that the drought has broken, their visits have lessened, but I can hear them rejoicing and calling in the trees and tall grasses in the gully and nearby Bush. They are amongst the feathered wonders of this world and the most drab-coloured of them can bring joy to anyone who has time to watch or listen to them. I do not pretend to know their proper names and am sure that they give not a tweak of their smart beaks as to what Man has decided on the matter. They have begotten their common names often by their beauty, habits and calls.

To go back to their visits. Dry weather brings to all who live near the Bush, wild creatures driven by hunger and thirst to seek their wants afar and I know a lot of kindly folks possess a clam shell or handy shallow dish which they place under the garden tap or near a tank. There the birds come and go—to bathe and drink. Some disdain to stand on the brink of the vessel but cling to the tap for the drips. You should see the sunbird doing this—any trapeze artist would top the bill with their ability. From a distance the depth of the shell will not always permit you to see the actual dippings in and out of the bathing fuss, so what is seen is a shower of rainbow drops of water gaily thrown out into the air. You feel sure that the birds are saying, "This is quite wonderful!"

One day I sat having a snack luncheon in the kitchen. The motor of the "frig" working softly, the wireless sounding quietly in the next room and the hose playing softly in a patch just outside the kitchen window. The water was falling in finest spray, forming a wee pool on a papaw leaf. Beside it, on a branch, were no less than five varieties and as many sizes of birds, each awaiting his turn for a bath. A serious business too, for as they finished their separate ablutions they settled in a nearby shrub and preened themselves where the sunlight filtered through, accentu-

ating their lovely colourings. There was no quarrelling amongst them, just soft twitterings. On the bitumen road down the hill motors went along noisily, but the sounds were distant and everything seemed far away. Birds do not seem to be long in accepting the presence of us humans. They come and go, helping themselves to grass seeds, water and nectar and must find enough for all their needs till the rains come and bring life to the vegetable kingdom at large.

Have you noticed that all birds, irrespective of size and habit, have character? We read of birds being described as humble or more humble than their mates. Surely that applies only to their plumage and colour. Some are certainly fierce, by habit and expression of eye, but all, I think, are beautiful. The gentler ones still have a command that does not require ferocity, and as for impudence! Even the Peaceful Dove manages to express that in the whirl of feathers when disturbed by Puss.

We have always had lots of Pheasant Coucals about—they really are graceful in their languid manner of flying, but this year the Bronze-winged Pigeon has been most conspicuous, sleek and fat. The flowering bloodwoods seem to attract Blue Mountain Lorikeets and they, like their gay and noisy parrot cousins go through the most comical antics. I recommend that you observe their acrobatics and love makings through field glasses.

There have been myriads of wrens of more than one kind around, no matter what the season. Walking down the road recently I disturbed six or more Lovely Wrens feasting in a mango tree. The tree is a young one and stands below road level, so the birds were almost on eye level. One or two flew away first, but at a bank so were longer in rising than they would have been from the other angle. It was morning and the sun was but in the tree top—I in the shadows. I had never seen these wrens about here before, a real indica-

tion to me of what the many bush-fires have done to our wild life. They were very beautiful, their colouring quite iridescent, and in the fuss of their and my astonishment, I could not define their markings, but there was a flash of brilliant blue, red and a dab of black. Some days later there were more of these birds taking water in the garden, but they were most timid.

And the sunbirds have been busy. Tearing down the old nest by the kitchen window and off with the bits to another site. Must have their building shortage too! During the tail end of the winter came lacy flowers on a wide-spread tree in the gully. They were flat and of considerable width and were followed in time by blue-black berries. Evidently they ripened gradually, for during the space of roughly three weeks an all black bird with bright red eyes reigned supreme—and I mean it! He stayed all day and every day. Up and down the branches he ran, chasing off hungry marauders. A true sample of greed and selfishness and accompanied with much noise.

The Friar Birds and the Mynas seem to be ever with us. The former amazing in the variety of their calls which one can translate into sentences to their own fancy, as "I won't come up. I won't come up." They certainly like the fruit—especially papaws, but their ravages are nil compared to the Flying Fox and his filth. The Myna, to my way of thinking, lives a life of comparative ease and free from want. He may be covered in horrid little lice—though I do not know if this is at all seasons or in all birds of his tribe—but what of that! He dwells near us nearly always—with us in our homes if given the chance. A new house to him is a thing of fine speculation and woe is he who leaves a small aperture for Myna. On citing same, he flies off, makes a snappy choice of mate and then cartage begins. Have you ever noticed how silly they look? Both birds carrying pieces of twigs and papers and feathers, nearly always greater in proportion to their

own overall length. Then they poise on the nearest jutting beam and I think for the sole purpose of judging how to get the awkward building material into the hole—rather like stowing long timber as ship's cargo. For food, he scavenges in the garden, drain and fowl-houses. Water appears to be no problem and if you have no shell bath, then watch him in the puddles, the deeper the better and accompanied by much noisy cheering. Notice too how he screams at the household cat, defiance in poise and note. I can't help it if he is a nuisance—I like his sauciness, his walk and his plumage. He may be foreign in origin—but he's Aussie here.

Must not forget the Kingfishers who sit on the light cables and do their hunting from there, always so busy watching for and catching their food that I wonder that they have time to sing so merrily. They and the Rainbow Birds who join them at seasons, make for more colour in our world. And the Kookaburra who sits on the light poles and trees and laughs! So much masters of all they survey—till YOU come round the corner and then their laughs break suddenly, one saying to his mate in what I imagine may be an undertone, "Oh, Hell," and fly off, to be heard from the next tall object or ridge.

Daresay this could go on for some length, but I think I ought to mention my two domestics, Mesdames Black Orpington. They do a dual job in rearing the nucleus of our new egg department. Number one was quite alone but she did not feel inclined to bother about a family, so number two was brought in, very fluttery and motherly. She sat with no trouble at all. In the end, number one's interest was so aroused that at first cheep she helped to usher the chicks around and now she continues to do that, number two does the daily strain—no unions there.

So whatever their size, type or geographical habitat, give thanks to God for all feathered creatures. They, like ourselves have good and bad qualities, and may the best ones always dominate.

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THE NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALIST

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.

MEETINGS

December Meeting, 1948. Ants and their way of living was the subject of a lecture by Mr. J. H. Holliday. The adaption of ants to their environment was explained, especially the modification to any life caused by the dessication of the Australian Continent that followed the humid conditions of thousands of years ago. Mention was made of the storing of nectar by the honey ants of the interior, also the cultivating of fungi by a species of ant in Brazil which gathers leaves which are processed so that fungus will grow in them.

December Field Day. The December Field Day was to Deep Creek about two miles south of Bluewater, on the Ingham Road.

January Meeting, 1949. The Meeting for January took the form of a members' night. Mr. L. R. Black read a paper on the Field Day for December and gave a very interesting description of the birds, fish and other things he had seen. Mr. K. Kennedy exhibited a ceremonial whistle, incense blower and pottery figure of a rain spirit, all from New Mexico and explained how the modern Yule tide festivities culminating in New Year, go back to Neolithic times, being an ancient sun ceremony of pre-historic man. He also exhibited specimens of the Conus Shell, the live mollusc of which can inflict a poisonous sting which has caused the death of several persons. Some bangles made in New Guinea from the Conus Shell were also shown.

Mrs. E. Kennedy exhibited a bronze figure of Osiris from an Egyptian tomb and spoke on ancient Egyptian mythology.

Mrs. S. Brock, in the absence of her husband who was up North, exhibited some jewel beetles which were gathered by him on the Barron River.

January Field Day. The January Field Day took place at Arcadia, Magnetic Island.

February Meeting, 1949. At the February Meeting a talk was given by Miss Nancy Hopkins on her recent visit to Matarinka, in the Northern Territory. Matarinka is on the Roper River and not far from the deserted Elsey homestead, made famous by Mrs. Aeneas Gunn. (Of this only a small cemetery remains). Miss Hopkins gave a graphic description of the type of country and its natural features, which include a spring of very clear mineral water forming a large pool that overflows into a tributary of the Roper, and a place called by the blacks the "Jump Under," where the Roper disappears and runs underground for a while. Some of the botanical features of the country were described and a comprehensive list of birds observed during her stay was given. Some of these Territory birds are identical with those of North Queensland, others are of the same genus but of different species. A humorous account of a war between two flocks of white and black cockatoos was related in which the black cockatoos were driven off.

February Field Day. The February Field Day was to Pallarenda.

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.

Next Meeting, Tuesday, 8th March, 1949.

Address by Mrs. Morley, ex-President Swansea Naturalists' Society, South Wales.
"Far Afield with the Naturalists in Merrie England."

MEETINGS.

14th December, 1948. Address by Mr. S. Sanders on Aboriginal Art in Cooktown and Cape Melville Areas.

11th January, 1949. Social function at Merchant Navy Club was well attended, when music and other entertainment was provided. Colour film of Bird Life on Michaelmas Cay exhibited by Mr. A. B. Cummings.

29th January, 1949. Launch Expedition to Turtle Bay. Although an attempt to reach a native art gallery did not succeed, a very interesting and well attended excursion was held.

8th February, 1949. Considerable collection of exhibits shown, including model native praece from Dutch New Guinea. Mr. Prince, shells from South and pressed flora from West Australia.

NEW MEMBERS ELECTED

8th February. D. R. Feiniger, Edward Street, Cairns; Wm. T. Chandler, Cooktown; Glen M. Storr, 22 Commercial Rd., Hyde Park, S.A.; P. J. Courtney, 66 Cairns St., Cairns; Noel McGregor, 196 Sheridan St., Cairns. Also Junior Members, D. J. Rixon, Cr. Severin and Minnie Sts., Cairns; W. A. Smart, Main Rd., Earlville.

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/-.
- Available Plants in North Queensland. Price 2/-.
- Birds occurring in North Queensland. Price 2/-.