

The North Queensland Naturalist

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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 MARCH, 1939.

REPORTS OF MEETINGS:

12th December, 1938.

Demonstration of Handling of Live Snakes by Mr. R. de Heaume.

trated by drawings, by Mr. F. A. Lamont.

New Members Elected:

Mr. R. de Heaume, 126 Abbott Street, Cairns.

13th February, 1939.

Lecture entitled "Sugar," illus-

Mr. S. G. Barnes, Abbott Street, Cairns.

THE PINK UNDER WING MOTH.

Phyllodes meyricki (Olliff).

Family Noctuidae, Sub-family Catocalinae.

By R. L. HUNTER, Cairns.

One of the many large and beautiful moths in North Queensland, *Phyllodes meyricki* is perhaps the least known, as it very rarely leaves the dense rain forests in which its food plant grows, this being a low-growing trailing plant.

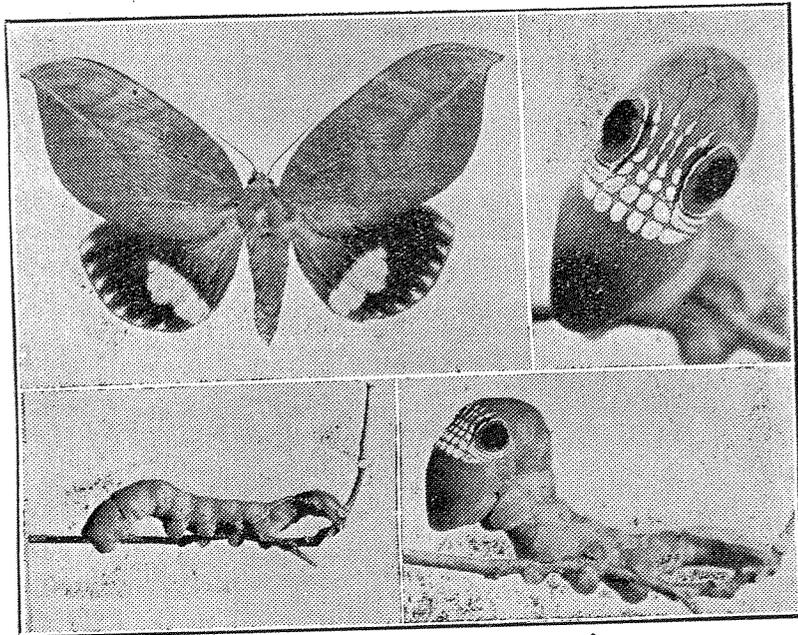
The larvae are semi-loopers and in the early stages are generally of some brownish colour. As the larvae become fully grown, instead of adopting some form of protective coloration, they become conspicuous, especially if irritated, when the markings give it a very fearsome appearance. The fully grown caterpillar is about five inches long and to see it resting on a stem, one would never guess the latent fantastic design and coloration which is concealed. If the larva is irritated, it jerks its head underneath its body, half raises itself from the stem upon which it is resting and presents an amazing sight. A transverse crease on the dorsal aspect of the caterpillar

hitherto scarcely noticeable now opens out fully to reveal huge blue black eye spots encircled with white and beneath these a double row of teeth-like markings thus transforming this apparently harmless larva into a terrifying object which doubtless helps to preserve it from its many enemies, such as birds, wasps, etc. When not alarmed, these extraordinary markings are folded in a transverse crease and are thus concealed from view.

The pupa is enclosed in a silken web, around which the larva wraps a few leaves. It is nearly two inches in length and is very beautiful, being of a dull bronze colour and encircled by metallic brass coloured bands, which retain their beauty even after the moth emerges.

The fully grown moth has a wing expanse of between six and seven inches.

Appearance: The upper wings have a special pattern of a greyish brown



Photographs by H. V. Chargois, Cairns.

PHYLLODES MEYRICKI (Olliff.)
Moth and Caterpillar.

Note in lower left-hand figure, transverse crease towards head end in which terrifying features are concealed.

colour with a peculiar white marking near the centre.

The lower wings are of a very deep grey with seven white spots around the outside edge and a large patch of bright pink extending nearly through the wing.

Underside: Upper wings are of a greyish colour with much darker

The plant on which the caterpillar *narrhena australiana*, F.v.M. (Family

centres and three white spots in the middle. The lower wings are of much the same colour as the upper wings, but the pink patch is much smaller, whilst the white spots are absent.

The moth has a very strong gimlet-like haustellum which enables it to pierce the stems of fruit over a quarter of an inch in thickness.

feeds has been determined as *Pycmenispermaceae*).

BOOK REVIEWS.

13. **AUSTRALIAN PARROTS**, by Neville W. Cayley, F.R.Z.S., Ex-Pres. Roy. Zool. Soc. of N.S.W., Ex. Pres. Roy. Australas. Ornith. Union, Vice-Pres. and Hon. Life Member Gould League of Bird Lovers of N.S.W.; 332 pp., 11 coloured plates, 19 other illust. Published by Angus and Robertson Ltd. The author, like his father of the same name, Neville Cayley, is famous as a particularly fine

bird painter, but he has also been a very keen student of birds and their ways. The coloured illustrations make the identification of the different parrots unmistakable, and as the book is written for the information of any who care to read it, whether naturalist or not, it is full of interest, and may surely claim to be the paramount authority on most matters concerning the Order *Psittaci*. The names,

vernacular—those given in "What Bird is That?" by the same author, with slight variations—and systematic as well as references, descriptions, history and geographical distribution with maps, habits and nests are given with much detail. The special aviaries for parrots provided by the Zoological Society of South Australia, in Adelaide, are illustrated, and a host of other information is available to any who care to peruse the book. The author is to be heartily congratulated upon the appearance of such a monumental work.

14. **TITANS OF THE REEF**, by Norman Caldwell, 248 pp. 25 full page photographic plates. Published by Angus and Robertson Ltd. Price 8/6.

The author is a professional shark catcher and describes lucidly and in a very interesting manner in good literary style, his experiences and encounters with such large monsters as the crocodile, various sharks, groper, etc. He evidently does not claim much knowledge of natural history and refers to the eel as a reptile, and the groper as a teleost. The large wasps building on his fishing gear are described as hornets. The single biological name is that of *Nebrodes concolor*, which the author describes as a shark which showers a stream of water over its unwary captor. As a thriller, the book certainly serves its purpose, especially to fishermen, who are not at all interested in natural history.

NOTES ON THE TERRESTRIAL FAUNA OF LINDEMAN ISLAND, WHITSUNDAY PASSAGE.

By

MELBOURNE WARD, F.R.Z.S., F.Z.S., Honorary Zoologist Australian Museum, Honorary Collector Queensland Museum.

Lindeman is a mountainous island, approximately five square miles in size. The highest peak is Mount Oldfield rising seven hundred and fifty feet above sea level. The nearest point of the mainland, Cape Conway, lies eight miles across the southern end of the Whitsunday Passage.

The terrain of Lindeman varies from steep slopes of loose stones and boulders on the northern side to fairly flat plateau on the south-west. All the southern slopes are rocky and covered with spear grass, *Heteropogon*. The knolls are capped with out-cropping rocks.

The vegetation forms four major ecological zones; the rain forest on the northern slopes; the Savannah land where poplar gums, *Eucalyptus platyphylla* are dominant and takes up the greater part of the plateau; tea tree, *Melaleuca Leucadendron*, park also on the plateau where swamp conditions are developed during the rainy season; open grass land on part of the plateau and the south slopes. Where rocks occur on the hillside, the *Pandanus* is found.

The headlands are clothed with hoop pines, *Araucaria Cunninghamii*, which add a touch of character to distant views of the island.

Each of the ecological zones mentioned supports a distinct fauna of reptiles, spiders and a few birds, such as the brush fowl, *Megapodius reinwardti*, in the rain forest and the quail in the grass on the plateau and southern slopes.

The notes which follow are grouped under separate headings for different groups of the animal kingdom.

Because of the fact that I was specialising in the study of the marine life of the region, my bush notes are unavoidably fragmentary. However, I have been tempted to record the observations in view of the little that has been written on the natural history of the island.

My wife and I resided on the island from December, 1933, to September, 1935.

Mammalia.

The only native animals on the island are a few koalas, *Phascolarctus cinereus*, which have been liberated from time to time, but during our stay on the island we saw no trace of them. Camps of flying foxes were often found in the rain forests and they paid devastating visits to the mango trees at the homestead. Insectivorous bats flitted about in the

gloaming, but I never succeeded in finding their hiding places. During a previous visit in 1928, I did find a small cave where the Little Bat, *Vespadelus pumilus*, was found clinging to the ceiling. Only one small family was then collected and subsequently, I was unable to find any more.

Aves.

Apart from the gulls, terns, sea eagles and hawks, the bird life was not rich. The common species was the Pied Currawong, *Strepera graculina*.

However, kookaburras, *Dacelo gigas*, pheasant-coucal, *Centropus phasianinus*, stone-plover, *Burhinus magnirostris*, were also numerous throughout the year.

Brush fowl mounds were quite common in the rain forests, and we saw the courting behaviour several times. Flocks of white cockatoo, *Kakatua galerita*, haunted the Savannah land on calm sunny days, but the shelter of the rain forest was sought during hard blows from the south-east, and several nests with young were found in hollows of Poplar Gums. It was interesting to observe the increasing number of small quail which came each year to breed on the grassy slopes. Colourful parakeets visited the Savannah lands and moonlit evenings were made weird by the haunting call of the Frog Mouth, *Podargus*.

Reptilia.

Altogether, there appear to be seventeen species of lizards, ranging in size from a ground goana down to legless lizards.

The Goana, *Varanus gouldi* (*Varanidae*), visited the beaches and excavated the turtle nests. Each goana seemed to have a special hiding place, generally a burrow under a partially buried rock, an escape aperture was generally hidden some distance away from the main entrance, and several times I had the mortifying experience of running the goana to earth in its lair and partially excavating its burrow, only to hear the rustle and crash of undergrowth as my quarry escaped through the cleverly concealed emergency exit.

Another favourite trick performed by the goana is to lie perfectly still if he thinks he has not been observed.

Next in size is the Blue-Tongued Lizard, *Tiliqua scincoides* (*Scincidae*), but it is of quite rare occurrence; only three individuals being seen. Another large skink, *Egernia major*, inhabited the rain forests and out-croppings of rock on the knolls. These lizards, measuring about eighteen inches in length, are copper brown above; their backs beautifully iridescent in the sunshine. We found them ideal vivarium subjects, readily tamed and intelligent, displaying a strong partiality for paw-paw and banana.

In the rain forest we found a beautiful little skink, *Lygosoma* (*Hinulia*) *tenuis*, with dark brown body, blue throat and chin, armpits rusty red and yellow belly; the females of this species were more dully coloured. Both sexes were observed creeping about amongst the moss-covered stones, pouncing upon unwary insects. Their manner of progression was by short dashes interspersed with careful examinations of their immediate surroundings, accompanied by violent jerking of the head as though signalling. Numbers of this species were also kept in the vivarium where they readily accepted termites as food.

Other small skinks were confined to the slopes and the Savannah land and all were kept in the vivarium at one time or another, and all showed great adaptability, feeding well on small insects.

Two small species of Geckos were found, the Tree Gecko, *Gehyra variegata*, and the Rock Gecko, *Heteronota bynoei*. The former frequented dead trees and specimens were collected by removing dead bark or splitting up the hollow trees. The Rock Gecko, on the other hand, preferred the under surfaces of stones or prone logs and some were taken under masses of coral lying close to the high tide mark.

A very interesting little lizard occurred on the rocky shores and on the mangrove trees, and used to make its way on to the inter-tidal region at low tide. Unfortunately, I did not collect specimens for study purposes.

Perhaps the rarest of the small lizards was one we called the Red Tail, *Ablepharus heteropus* (*Scincidae*); the few specimens that were taken came from a small area of steeply sloping hillside at the western end of the island.

(To be Continued)