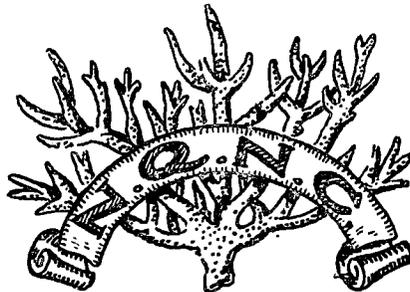

THE NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALIST



CAIRNS

Journal of

NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALIST CLUB

ADDRESS — Box 991, P.O., CAIRNS
North Queensland, Australia

Vol. 29

SEPTEMBER 30th, 1961

No. 129

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"Each author is responsible for the opinions and facts expressed in his or her article".

NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALISTS' CLUB

Founder Presd. the late Dr. HUGO FLECKER.

OBJECTS — The Furtherance of the Study of the various branches of Natural History and the Preservation of Our Heritage of Indigenous Fauna and Flora.

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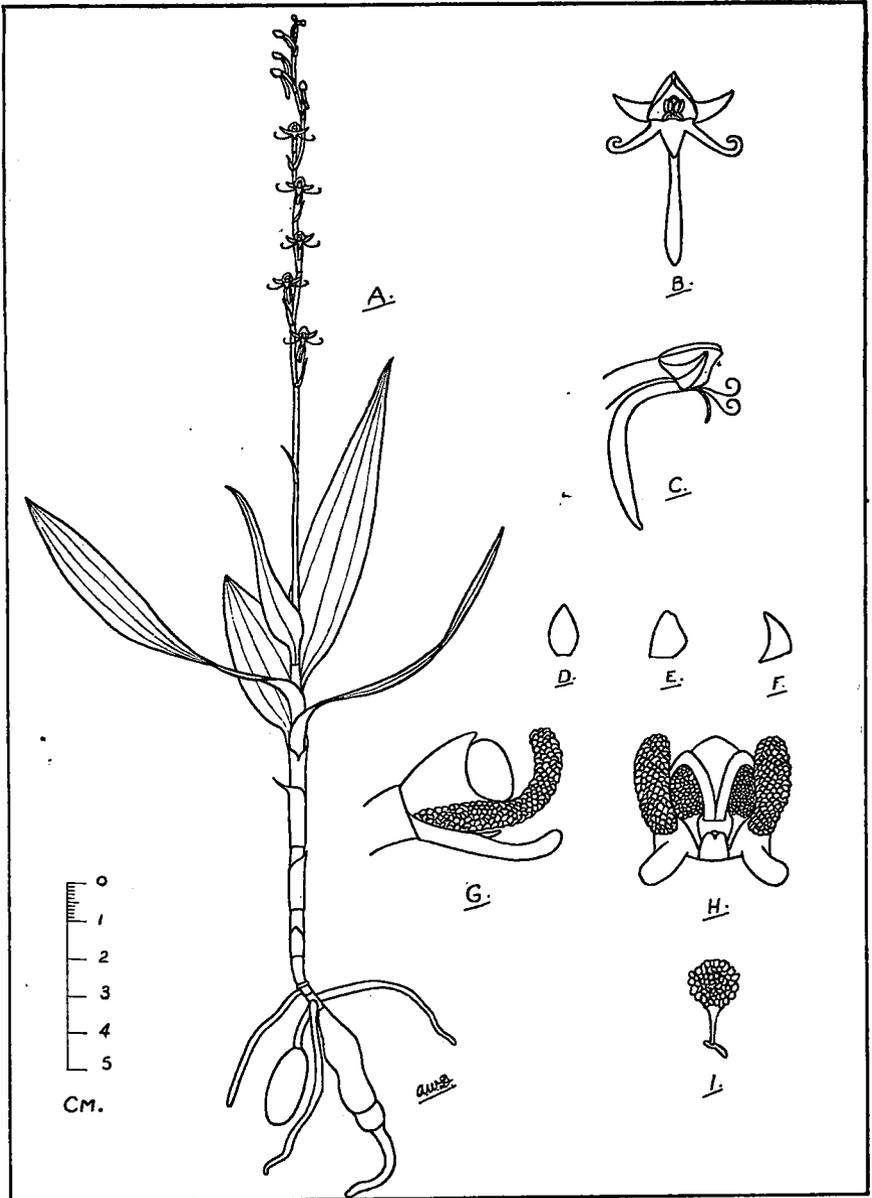
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HABENARIA PAPUANA KRZL.



A. PLANT NATURAL SIZE
 B. FLOWER FROM THE FRONT X 5
 C. FLOWER FROM THE SIDE X 5
 D. DORSAL SEPAL X 5
 E. PETAL X 5
 F. LATERAL SEPAL X 5
 G. COLUMN FROM THE SIDE X 40
 H. COLUMN FROM THE FRONT X 40
 I. POLLINIUM X 40

A NEW HABENARIA (Orchidaceae) FOR NORTH QUEENSLAND

BY A. W. DOCKERILL

Habenaria papuana Krzl. in Warbg. in Engl. Bot. Jahrb. 18 : 188 (1894)

...Syn :— *Peristylus remotifolius* J.J.Sm., Nova Guinea 8 : 134 et t 45 (1911).

Plant terrestrial, 15 - 35 cm. tall. Tubers 2 - 4 x about 1 cm, usually sub-lobed but inclined to be irregular and usually with a root projecting from the apex; immature tubers very regularly ovoid or obloid and having no apical root. Roots not numerous, about 1.5 mm diam. Stem 5 - 12 x 0.2 - 0.5 cm with usually 3 sheathing bracts and at the apex, a rosette of leaves (occasionally leaves scattered along stem). Leaves 4 - 7, 6 - 17 x 1 - 3 cm, lanceolate. Inflorescence apical, 8 - 20 cm long; bracts 1 - 2, not sheathing, about 10 x 1.5 mm. Flowers 6 - 36, lime green, about .1 cm diam. Dorsal sepal about 3.0 x 1.5 mm, ovate, cucullate, forming, with the petals, a galea. Lateral sepals about 3.0 x 1.5 mm, falco-deltoid, divergent. Petals about 3 x 2 mm, usually shallowly but broadly emarginate (but sometimes obtuse), dilated about the middle on one side only. Labellum about 2 x 7 mm, trilobate; lateral lobes about 3 mm long, filiform, hooked, widely divergent; mid-lobe about 1 x 1 mm deltoid, decurved; spur about 8 mm long, rather slender, somewhat dilated near the apex, decurved near the base. Column about 1 x 1 mm. Stigmatic arms about 0.75 mm long, cylindrical, advate to the labellum. Rostellum at the base of the column, about 0.25 x 0.25 mm, subdeltoid, prominent. Stamines large, about 1 mm long, cylindrical, upcurved, reigose. Anther cells rather widely separated at their apices but converging at their bases. Pollinia sub-globose, granular; caudicles about as long as pollinia, stout; viscidia rather large slender-ovate.

This species was first observed by the present author, growing in dense rain forest near the Mossman River in June 1960 and again in May 1961. Schlechter Orch. von Deutsch - New Guinea t 2, Nr. 6 (1928 gave 8 locality records for it in New Guinea.

The author is indebted to Dr. Blake of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens for assistance in identifying this species.

The only other species of the genus in Australia with leaves in the middle of the plant is *H. mesophylla* Krzl., but its flowers are much larger than those of the present species and its lateral lobes of the labellum are triangular and mid-lobe of labellum about 2 cm long and filiform whereas those of the present species are in the first instance, filiform and in the second, about 1 mm long and triangular.



COLLECTING ANTS IN THE CAIRNS AREA.

It is doubtful whether anywhere else in the World there is an area of comparable size in which there are so many species of ants as in the country round Cairns. After 2 months I still find every day what are to me new species : I have no doubt I could go on doing so for a long while.

The most prominent genus of ants is *Iridomyrmex*. These ants run about quickly and erratically on paths and the edges of roads. There are at least a dozen different species of them close round Cairns. The "Meat Ant" (*I. detectus*) which is common on the Atherton Tablelands but not found in Cairns is one of them. Another is the brown-black "Stink Ant" (*I. nitidus*) though it is a lumbering creature beside its twinkle-footed relatives.

A great many ants are to be found on trees. There are a number of varieties of *Polyrachis* (spined ants) most of which are fairly large and many of which have beautiful sheens on their backs. *Crematogasters* are other common tree ants. They are smallish and usually dark in colour. The last—

or gaster—section of these ants is rather triangular in shape and is frequently turned up, especially if they are disturbed. Most of the Iridomyrmex are great tree-climbers and there are several species of a minute ant, *Tecnomyrmex*, which can be seen speeding along the bark of trees and logs. They look like tiny spiders and the common one is greyish in colour.

In grass or on paths the little *Lampromyrmex*, a very thin shiny ant, is common, especially a beautiful black species.

The ant which is most numerous over the whole area is undoubtedly the little reddish *Pheldole* which comes a good deal into houses. It gets everywhere and is vicious enough when in great numbers to drive out all the other ants; so in Kuranda village, for instance, or on most of Green Island or parts of the Tableland it is the only ant. The few larger workers are usually darker in colour and have big round heads, which give the species the name of *P. megacephala*. To one who is interested in ants this one is a thorough nuisance.

The best-known and probably most prominent ant is however the "Green Tree Ant" (*Oecophylla smaragdina*) which I have found also in Eastern India, though there and I believe in some parts of Queensland it is far less green than round Cairns.

Outside the town packs of a long, thin, black ant of a species of *Lobopelta* may be seen dragging back prey to their home. Twenty or thirty of the ants may combine to drag a big beetle or other insect up a steep slope; it will be drawn over or under outstanding obstacles with considerable abroitness and with astonishing speed. There are two species of *Opisthopsis*, brilliantly coloured ants which move quickly in fits and starts. They are very difficult to catch, as their reactions are extraordinarily quick and their large eyes are not just for show purposes.

The big "Spider Ant" (*Leptomyrmex erythracephala*) is not found in Cairns, but is just outside. It is black with a red head and has rather a pleasant musty odour: it is also intensely inquisitive and even if gently removed, will soon trot back and continue its investigations. Bull Ants are not present in Cairns, but the red jumping one is very common round Mareeba. It is, however, a shy retiring ant and will certainly get out of the way if it can.

I am often asked how I catch ants. Well, it depends on the ant! For Bull Ants only I use a pair of forceps. For other large ants and for those of medium size the fingers are the best thing. For those which are fast and proficient at dodging it is a good idea to block their progress with one hand and try to pick them up with the other. With *Opisthopsis* and other exceptionally slippery customers it may be necessary to bring the fingers down on top of the ant. But this method should be avoided if possible with soft ants — of which *Opisthopsis* is unfortunately one. For the smallest ants one can either use a paintbrush dipped in alcohol or pick up a pinch of dust and ants and deposit it on your other hand; and then suck up the little ants individually with the paint brush. This way reduces the amount of dirt and sand which gets into the little phials — half filled with a mixture of 70% alcohol and 30% water — in which the ants are put.

It seems to be commonly believed that if one collects ants one must expect to get a lot of bad stings and painful bites. This is not so. Most of the Bull Ants are retiring creatures but it is well not to handle them. All the primitive Ponerine ants have powerful stings but most of them are most reluctant to use them, and the few which are likely to sting are fortunately not as a rule those best endowed to do so. I am bound to say that I have handled a lot of the notorious "Green Head" ants without any having stung me and have frequently had "Green Tree" ants walking over me without getting more than 2 bites in 2 months. Many of the smallest ants are vicious when disturbed but are not capable of doing much hurt to a human being. Any injuries you receive will probably come from mosquitoes and sandflies!

L. H. WEATHERILL.

THE CHILLAGOE LIMESTONE

Most people who are attracted to the limestone caves at Chillagoe confine their visits to what are generally called the Chillagoe Caves, actually the Royal Arch Caves, which are about three miles out of the town, and the only ones for which a guide is at present available.

However there are numerous other cave-systems that have not yet been properly opened up or even explored; others were open to the public when the district was more populated than it is now. Of the latter, eight have been gazetted as National Parks and Scenic Areas all in the Chillagoe—Mungana area. They are: Donor's and Tower of London; Jubilee and Diano; Cathedral; Geck and Spring; Eclipse; Ryan Imperial; Markham and Royal Archway.

The limestones themselves form a belt of late Silurian marine deposits running roughly S.E. to N.W. for some miles, and are part of the very complex Chillagoe Series. To the west, about three miles past the Royal Arch Caves, they lie unconformably on very ancient pre-Cambrian deposits.

As these rocks have not been altered so much by heat and pressure as similar deposits, such as those at Jenolan in N.S.W., fossils are quite plentiful. Some giant corals form columns of great height, but there are also a number of smaller fossil types represented. A good exposure of crinoids is said to be opposite the old Dorothy mine near Mungana.

Aboriginal cave-paintings are to be found in a few cave-shelters scattered throughout the district. There is a small but quite good series in a shelter near the Mungana caves, although unfortunately some of the paintings have been defaced by the action of vandals. Other paintings, but of no great extent are at Chillagoe (including Tower of London), Mungana and Calcifer. There may be more that remain to be discovered. In two or three places, grooves in the rock indicate a very early aboriginal culture. They were probably used as bone-sharpening grooves.

Vegetation supported by the limestone tends to be shrubby and stunted, and differs markedly from that of the surrounding open-forest country. There are two exceptions which may be found in either situation: the 'cocky apple' and a type of *Baubinia* with small dark leaves very different from the large-leaved species known to coast-dwellers. Worth mentioning are at least two species of kurrajong (*Brachychiton* sp.)—namely the flame and bottle trees, also a species of dry climate fig. These seem to thrive on the rocky environment afforded by the limestones. During the Wet season, spider lilies grow abundantly.

The shrubby undergrowth forms an ideal retreat for many species of small birds. These include brown honeyeaters, banded and masked finches, wag-tails, apostle birds, yellow honeyeaters and Jacky winters; also rainbow birds and black-faced wood-swallows from the nearby open-forest country. Larger birds are also well represented: many of the black-and-white birds such as magpies, pied butcher-birds, Bennet's crow, peewees and pied currawongs are common; black-faced and white-breasted cuckoo-shrikes; channel-billed cuckoos during the Wet season; blue-faced honeyeaters and white cockatoos. Both species of kookaburra can be heard frequently, or perched way up on a high part of the limestone formations—this is also a favourite look-out post for magpies and currawongs. A great bower-bird will occasionally build a playground at the base of a limestone bluff among low bushes, and such night-birds as frogmouths and owlet-nightjars seem to favor the protection afforded by the tree-cover to roost during the day.

S. J. TREZISE.

THE BROWN HONEYEATER

I first heard the Brown Honeyeater up at Davies Creek Road. Its cheery little call was to be heard in the flowering bottle brush trees, but try as I would, I could not see the singer. As he flew from bush to bush, I scrambled

over the hot rocks, clasping my binoculars and every now and again scanning the bushes — to no avail. Then one day I heard him in our garden. I rushed outside only to see a flash as he flew to the gardens behind. This went on for some time until I began to think I never would identify this elusive singer. My only impressions to date were of a small brown bird streaking hell for leather away from me. At last came the day of recognition—there on my neighbours plum tree was a small bird, olivey brown above, light whitey grey under, yellow wash on wings, large curved honeyeater bill and yellow patches near the ear. A bird easy to lose in the foliage and well earning the name *Gliciphila indistincta*. (Fond of sweet — not clear.)

On August 28th of last year, I saw Brown Honeyeater pulling at some cobweb in our orange tree. Straight away I guessed nesting was the reason and watched to see where she would take her material. Much to my pleasure, she just hopped over the branch and began to build in that same orange tree, in good view of our verandah where much of our life goes on. The female only built the nest, a small cup shaped structure suspended in a small fork-made of narrow strips of bark, vine tendrils and bound together with cobweb and decorated with spiders egg sacs, lined with some sort of plant down. The nest was completed on September 1st. The male was watching near by all the while she was building but rarely came near the tree unless a Yellow Honeyeater or Lesser Lewin Honeyeater went to the tree to sip nectar from the orange blossoms. Then he flew there and chattered and chattered in fine style, but the two birds, both bigger than he, took not the slightest notice of him. On September 2nd the female just came and inspected the nest. On the 3rd there was one egg and on the 4th a second was laid and incubation began. The male did not assist in the incubation but sang in the neighbouring trees, keeping guard. The female would be well down in the nest, but the moment the male gave warning she would lift her head and listen, and if she thought it was necessary she would leave the nest and join the male. If she felt that danger was not imminent, she would sink down again. She left the nest quite frequently for food and at one period, I think because of a Spangled Drongo in the garden, she left the nest 6 times in 1½ hours, sometimes for as long as 10 minutes at a time. Even so, on 18th September the eggs were hatched and there were two naked babies with big yellow gapes. There was no sign of the egg shells in the nest or under the tree. A fine grey down appeared on the babies after 3 or 4 days. The female only fed them and they grew very fast. By 7 days their eyes were open. Now and again the male came down to the nest and looked at his children but if the female was there when he arrived, she quickly chased him away. By October 2nd except for very much shorter tails the baby birds wore the same plumage as the adults. On this day they left the nest. They were on the back of the orange tree and mother evidently thought I was a bit too close to them as she did a "broken wing" act through the church yard. I did not see the young again.

A few weeks later a neighbour showed me another nest built by the Browns, and I believe the young were successfully reared. I am sure they were the same parents as I have only seen the one pair flying around our garden.

The nesting season is now over, but still now and again I hear the cheery call note of this charming little honeyeater, and watch him splashing and enjoying himself in our bird bath.

M. L. CASSELS.



KIAMA TO THE NATURALIST

BY L. CADY, KIAMA, N.S.W.

Kiama, with a population of approximately 5,200 is a popular tourist resort situated some 74 miles south of Sydney, between the Saddleback Mountain and the Pacific Coast.

The main tourist attraction is its famous "Blow Hole", which is seen to the best advantage during a strong South-east wind, when it shoots a spray

some 50 to 60 feet into the air.

Kiama offers a wealth of interesting subjects for all students of natural history.

The Geology of the area has commanded much interest for many years. The area is volcanic in structure. In the area between the Robertson plateau (approx. 2,800 ft.) and the coast the following rock, strata of Triassic and Permian age occurs together with a number of igneous rocks of intrusive and extrusive occurrence descending in the following sequence. Tertiary Basalt, Wianamata Group, Hawksbury Sandstone, Narrabeen Group, Wallaya Dolerite, Dhruwalgha Tinguaitite, Nepheline Syenite, Minnamurra Latite, Camberwarra Latite, Saddleback Latite, Jamberoo Tuffs, Bumbo Basalt, Kiama Tuffs, Blowhole Basalt, and at different levels coal seems are found to occur. Around the sea shore one can collect fossils of marine shells imbedded in the Tuffs.

The area is well known for its Basalt quarries, these together with dairying, being the main industry of Kiama for the last 100 years, previous to this Cedar cutting was the towns livelihood.

The coastal plateau is rather hilly and steep, being clothed in most places with fairly heavy brush forest. In places pockets of good Rain Forest still exist, in these pockets we find numerous Ferns, Orchids and Rain Forest trees. (The rarer types will be included at the end of the paper.)

Referring to the orchids some 100 odd species have been recorded by the writer in Kiama and the surrounding areas.

Surrounding Kiama are Sandstone capped mountains which contain areas of interesting heath lands and of course the distinct sandstone Flora to accompany it.

On Jamberoo Mt. we have the Barren Ground's Faunal Reserve No. 3, two very rare birds still exist within the Reserve, they are 1. The Eastern Bristle Bird (*Dasyornis brachypterus*) and 2. Swamp Parrot (*Pezoporus walli-cus*) and on the slopes and in the gullies one often hears the Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novae-hollandiae*), The Green Cat Bird (*Ailuroedus crassirostris*) and the Eastern Whip-bird (*Psophod es olivaceus*) calling.

Another place of interest is the Minnamurra Falls Reserve, an area not to be missed when visiting Kiama. This Reserve is well known for its Ferns and its beautiful Lower Water Fall. Some 80 odd species of Ferns have been collected by the Curator within the Reserve.

Insects are found in fair numbers, well over 130 species of Ants have been recorded between Kiama and Nowra (25 miles South) and some 82 species of Butterflies are to be found in the surrounding area.

The Fauna of the district is not well known to the writer, but it is recorded that the following is to be found. Wombat (*Vombatus hirsutus*) Native Cat (*Dasyurus quoll*) Platypus (*Ornithor hynchus anatinus*) Spiny Ant-eater (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*).

RARER FLORA OF THE KIAMA DISTRICT.

ORCHIDS.—*Burnettia cuneata*; *Caladenia iridescens*; *Chiloglottis Gunnii*; *Prasophyllum densum*; *P. Woollsi*; *P. depectens*; *P. uroglossum*; *Bulbophyllum minutissimum*.

FERNS.—*Hymenophyllum bivalve*; *Sphaerocionium Lyallii*; *Pteris comans*; *Lindsaea trichomanoides*; *Mecodium rarum*; *M. australe*; *Macroglena caudata*.

RAIN FOREST TREES.—*Emmenosperma alphitonioides*; *Daphnandra micrantha* (Socket Wood); *Heimerliodendron brunonianum* (Bird-Lime Tree) *Euchryphia moorei* (Plum Wood); *Podocarpus elatus* (Pine Plum); *Litsea reticulata* (Bolly Gum); *Cinnamomum oliveri* (Oliver's Sassafrass).

In an article such as this, one could not possibly enlighten people to the other interests found in the Kiama district, and as a result many topics of interest must be sacrificed.

Kiama is, and we hope always will be a good hunting ground for the keen student of nature.

WINNER OF THE H. FLECKER MEMORIAL MEDALLION ESSAY, 1961

IAN ORRELL, SMITHFIELD, AGED 12.

"THE RED-BROWED FINCH"

The red-browed finch is a small, plump bird about three to three and a half inches in length. It has a grey breast and head, with a red rump, brow, and beak. The wings are olive-green and so is the back. It has a black tail, brown legs and feet and a white wash.

When I first started observing them I noticed that some had a yellowish collar around the back and sides of the neck, but another naturalist told me that these were birds which had crossed with other species.

The young red-brows have red rumps, beaks and brows, although one book I have says that the young birds have no red on their bodies. The young red-brows also have a white patch on their gape.

Their nest is an untidy ball-shaped one, with an entrance at the front. Usually it is made of dried and green fine grasses, but I have seen them made of dried and green bladey grass and even with the tassel from the sugar-cane arrows and they are lined with plant down, very fine dried grasses and the fluff from the sugar-cane tassel.

They build their nests in many places and I have seen them in banana trees, citrus trees, mango trees, papaw trees, the very tops of young pine trees about seven feet high, also in high bladey-grass, bougainvilleas and in the tops of granadilla vines. One made its nest in the top hands of a banana bunch.

The hen bird lays five or six white eggs in the nest.

The breeding season of the red-brow is supposed to be only during the spring and summer months, but this year red brows are still building and hatching in July. I think that this may be because of the extremely dry season and our farm is irrigated.

I have seen the red-browed finch feeding on guinea grass seeds, Mackie's Curse seeds, and other seeds of grasses. They also eat big brown flying ants and even dried carrion from the roadside.

At the beginning of this year it was very dry and there was not much food about, the little red brows would come in flocks of twenty or thirty to eat canary seed which I scattered on the lawn. Some bold ones would come under the canary cage for it, and even into my room for seed, and one even found the seed packet, and fed from that.

A pleasant and interesting incident happened in February when the red-brows built a nest in between two hands of bananas. The shape looked like a flattened-out kettle—which had been made of grass. Mum, thinking that there was nothing in the nest, cut the tree down and threw the nest into another row of bananas. About an hour afterwards, I looked carefully and found that there were five baby finches in it. These birds were put into a cage with a small piece of sheepskin to keep them warm. When I was putting them into the cage, one of the birds got away into some thick undergrowth, and it took me half an hour to find him. He had crawled into a tiny hole in the ground.

This all happened at about ten in the morning. They were fed on warm, sweet milk from an eye-dropper. The second morning on finely crushed Vita-Brits mixed with warm milk and sugar, and also cod-liver oil from a teaspoon. On the third day the cage was hung in a tree in the garden to let the little birds have some sunlight, and the parents found them.

I watched carefully how the mother fed them. She took canary-seed which I had scattered and cracked it up with her beak. This she made into a mash in her mouth and fed it back to the babies.

On the fourth day I let the babies out of the cage and found that four of them could fly, and these went back to the flock. The fifth one could not fly, and he was kept for another two days, one parent came to the cage each morning to feed him. When he could fly properly, he went with the others and joined the flock as well.

By watching the finches for almost a year I have found that bird-books are not always correct, and that the best way to study Nature is to observe for yourself.

POT POURRI

One member mysteriously lost a budgerigar from his cage though all members in the family swore they had not opened the cage door at any time. This remained a puzzle for some weeks until one day, hearing frantic squeaks from the budgies cage, one of the family ran on to the verandah in time to see a Black Butcher bird pulling the bird through the holes of the wire cage. Despite the size of the bird and the smallness of the hole, he had nearly got the poor thing through—and so the weeks old mystery was solved.

Re Black Bandicoots — another member states that he has also seen these animals at MacDonalds Creek and Bucklands Road, Babinda, his theory being that perhaps the animal had just come into its new coat of fur and so looked darker than normal.

There is a very tidy spider at our house. Each night she makes her web on the front porch — a large round web — and presumably catches enough food during the night for her needs because when we go in to fetch the milk in the morning, she has taken down her web and not a vestige is left. Perhaps someone could tell us the name of this spider?

EDITORIAL

Members are reminded that subscriptions are now due again. Will you please help the Treasurer and the Club by sending them in without waiting for a reminder thus saving time and postage.

Would the member who asked for Journals 115 and 116 please get in touch with the Secretary as these are now available.

WANTED. Copies of the following journals are urgently wanted. Nos. 55, 56, 66, 75 and 109. If any one has a spare copy of any of these journals will they please send them to the Secretary.

The Club would also be glad to receive any old Journals no longer required as stocks of some of the older numbers are precariously low.

We would like to thank Mr. H. A. Bruce for his generous donation of Mr. Monkman's book "Escape to Adventure" for our Library and also to Mr Black for booklets received. If members have any books on Natural History that are no longer required, we would be pleased to receive them to help build up our Library. The Library is now painted and books in position and in future it will be open to Members or Visitors each Friday at 7.30 p.m. for borrowing books or informal discussion with each other. It is hoped that all members will make full use of this facility. As soon as possible a list of books will be sent to Country Members so that they may also borrow books.

We congratulate Ian Orrell (aged 12) on his excellent essay for the Flecker Memorial Medallion, which is printed elsewhere in this Journal. Another junior member Peter Cassels (aged 9) also submitted an entry and received a supplementary prize. It is disappointing that only these two of our junior members entered for the competition.

Two successful Beach Field Days were held—Bells Beach in June and Yule Point in July. The former was a really cosmopolitan one, as we had visitors, 1 Cuban, 3 Americans, 1 New Zealander, 1 Scotshman, 1 Englishman and with members 1 Irish, 1 English, 1 Dutch and 1 Yugoslav the rest being Australians. It is nice to see so many visitors and representing so many countries. Bleak and cold weather rather marred this day causing the tide to recede very little and consequently not much of the reef was uncovered. However, all were satisfied with the specimens collected. A Death Adder was found, bottled and taken home for a small museum. Many interesting birds were seen in scrub not far from the beach. At Yule Point there was also a nice roll up of visitors and this time the weather was hot and sunny — a

W. C. Balzer

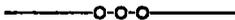
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