

The North Queensland Naturalist

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JOY OF A NATURALIST

By S. DEAN, Cairns

*I might have been rich if I'd wanted
The Gold, instead of the friendships I've made;
I might have had fame, if I'd wanted
Instead of the Hours I've played.*

*I'm standing today on the far edge of life
And I'm just looking backwards to see
What I've done with the years, and the days that were mine
And all that has happened to me.*

*I haven't much of a fortune to leave
To those that shall carry my name
And nothing I've done shall entitle me here
To a place on the Tablets of Fame.*

*But I've loved the great sky and its places of blue;
I've lived with the birds and the trees;
I've turned from the pleasures of silver and gold
To share in such pleasures as these.*

*I've lived with my friends, and shared in their joys;
Known sorrow with all its tears,
I've harvested much from my acres of life
Though some say I've squandered my years.*

*For much that is fine has been mine to enjoy
And I think I have lived of my best.
I have no regrets, as I'm nearing the end
For the Gold I might have possessed.*

NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALISTS' CLUB

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR 1955-1956

By ALFRED A. READ

IT IS AGAIN my pleasure to present this, the President's annual report on the progress of the North Queensland Naturalists' Club for the year 1955-1956.

First of all I desire to start by thanking the members for the help they have so generously given during the year and for their persistent attendance at the monthly meetings. Most of our members in general are busy people in their own spheres and yet there are not many meetings at which there have not been interesting topics to discuss, and although not all of us can come along to every meeting or do as much as we feel we should like to do, yet all are doing their best in their own ways.

Then again the amount of help that is constantly arriving by post in the way of inquiries and advice from country members, research work constantly being done by some of our specialists appear from time to time in the pages of this journal.

At this stage, I cannot help but point out the wonderful amount of untiring energy being spent by Dr. Flecker in every sphere of the club's activities and more especially in the gathering and compilation of the material for this journal so consistently published, that has made the club so highly regarded throughout the world where scientific information is sought after, and the thanks of this club are due, in no small measure to those untiring energies, and may these energies be with us for a long time yet.

There were 15 new members for the year, which is quite pleasing and although the membership does not grow by that number every year, there is always a steady advance in that direction.

One major activity started by the club this year was the founding of the North Queensland Native Flora Preservation Society. We were able to do this by a most generous gift of £50 from one of our esteemed members of Woy Woy, N.S.W. I refer to Miss Minard F. Crommelin. This donation has been placed in a trust fund under the name of the N.Q. Naturalists' Club Crommelin Fund and is to be used solely for the furtherance of the Native Flora Preservation Society, the aims of which are the preservation and cultivation of North Queensland Native Flora, and although there is a great amount of hard work ahead, there has been considerable spade work already carried out and the great response from so many of our members and outside friends, which augurs well for the future of the society's activities.

I have already made reference to the quality of the material in the club's journal. I would like to draw attention to the source of the supply of a great deal of material which has appeared in the last several issues. I refer now to our own esteemed member, Mr. Stanley F. St. Cloud. He is not merely an orchid fancier, but is fast becoming one of Queensland's orchid authorities, more especially of North Queensland orchids. The amount of study and research that he puts into his chosen field of interest is fast placing him among our topmost authorities and these honours are reflected on to the club not only by personal contact, but through the medium of the journal, which reaches a far greater circle of endeavours beyond these parts.

Another one of our members I would like to refer to in the same strain is Mr. William Hosmer, F.Z.S., who took up the study of Herpetology some time before coming to Cairns a few years ago, when he found a vast untouched field for research that his knowledge of the reptiles of North Queensland has advanced far beyond the ordinary. It was his command of the subject that caused him to be elected a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London.

Mr. Hosmer is now attached to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Melbourne, and although he has not been there long, he has already been sent up to this region on a special assignment, for he arrives this same night flying from Melbourne.

There is not much more I can add, having touched on — to my way of mind — three of our major interests of the club.

At the beginning of this talk, I thanked the members in general for their co-operation and attention during the year. I now wish to thank my officers and committee for their great help and guidance, and for their personal interest to my wife and myself. It has been a very pleasant and harmonious term and I trust that whoever is chosen to take my place for the coming year will undoubtedly enjoy the same help and assistance that has been extended to me.

MILKING A CATERPILLAR

Winning Essay for H. Flecker Natural History Medallion

By YVONNE HENDERSON

ONE day, whilst I was in the bush near a creek I was surprised to see a caterpillar about an inch to an inch and an eighth in length. Green in colour, with a pair of dark brown spots on its back, it seemed to be annoyed by three or four green ants. On closer investigation, I discovered that these ants were stroking it with their feelers. With the aid of a magnifying glass I noticed on its back a small gland on which was a drop of liquid.

One of the ants noticing this sucked it into its body through its mouth, and during this act, two little rods were pushed up on either side. The amazing feature was that each ant took its turn in repeating this performance. All the while the caterpillar remained very still. As these glands are rather small this can be more readily seen through a magnifying glass, as I found.

This is an unusual occurrence and may only be discovered by chance or by close observation.

SOME ISOTYPES AND A DUPLICATE SYNTYPE IN THE NORTH QUEENSLAND HERBARIUM, CAIRNS

NEW SPECIES DESCRIBED BY C. T. WHITE

IN our issue No. 114 dated 1st February appeared an article, entitled "Some Co-type Specimens in the North Queensland Herbarium, Cairns." Its contents are grossly misleading in that many of the specimens listed are not actually in the North Queensland Herbarium. In addition, a number of those listed are duplicate paratypes only and these have been omitted from this paper. It has been deemed advisable to rewrite the

article and to ignore the earlier script entirely. It is greatly to be regretted that such a step should be necessary so as to keep in step with accepted taxonomic practice.

Of the following specimens which are stored in the North Queensland Herbarium at Cairns all, with one exception, are ISOTYPES of new species described by C. T. White. The exception is *Hodgkinsonia frutescens* C. T. White. In this case the specimen listed is a DUPLICATE SYNTYPE.

CUNONIACEAE

Ceratopetalum corymbosum C.T.W., Proc. Roy. Soc. Qd. 53, 216 (1942).
Cook District: Thornton Peak, alt. 4,500 ft., Dr. H. Flecker (flowers)
14th December, 1940. N.Q. Nat. Club 7108.

LOGANIACEAE

Gaertnera australiana C.T.W., Proc. Roy. Soc. Qd. 53, 223 (1942).
Cook District: Utchee Creek, in "jungle," Dr. H. Flecker (flowers)
27th Nov., 1938. N.Q. Nat. Club 5313.

MYRTACEAE

Acmena macrocarpa C.T.W., Proc. Roy. Soc. Qd. 53, 217 (1942).
Cook District: Between Josephine and Russell Creeks, Dr. H. Flecker,
29 vi 1938, small tree 40 ft., flowers white. N.Q. Nat Club 4986.
Xanthostemon brachyandrus C.T.W., Proc. Roy. Soc. Qd. 53, 219 (1942).
Cook District: Harvey Creek, F. R. Morris (flowering specimen) 19th
Nov., 1939. Tree 40 ft., flowers white, fragrant. N.Q. Nat. Club 6440.

RUBIACEAE

Hodgkinsonia frutescens C.T.W., Proc. Roy. Soc. Qd. 53, 220 (1942).
Cook District: Yungaburra, in rain forest, Dr. H. Flecker (flowers)
24th December, 1939. Bush, 4 ft. high, flowers white. N.Q. Nat Club
6..6.
Ixora orophila C.T.W., Proc. Roy. Soc. Qd., 53, 220 (1942).
Cook District: Thornton Peak, alt. 4,500 ft., Dr. H. Flecker, 14th
December, 1940. N.Q. Nat Club 7110.

BULBOPHYLLUM MACPHERSONII VAR. SPATHULATUM

By A. W. DOCKRILL

Bulbophyllum macphersonii Rupp var. *spathulatum* Dockrill et St. Cloud, var. nov. Differt a typo in floribus maioribus, ad 2.25 cms. usque trans sepala expansa; et praesertim in labello valde spathulato, cum disco lineari acute dilato in laminam apicalem, concavam, late ovatam.

North Queensland: Davies Creek (Mareeba), 20/5/1956.

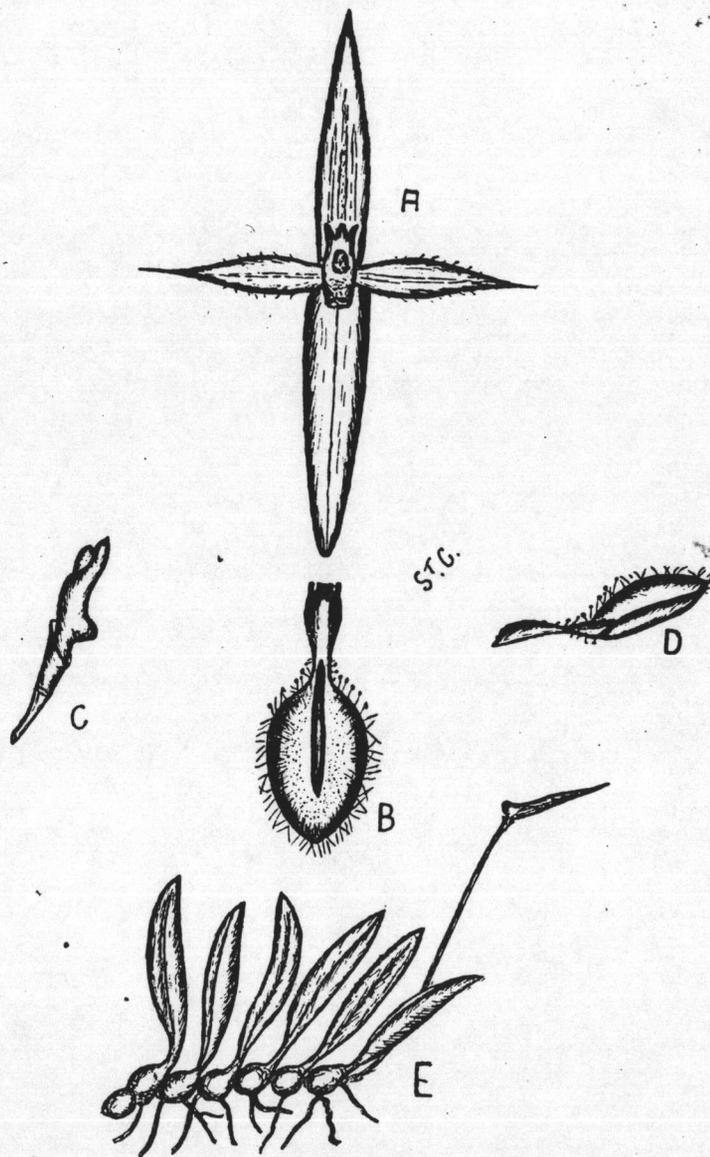
Leg. S. F. St. Cloud and J. H. Wilkie.

Holotype in National Herbarium of New South Wales.

Differing from the type by its more freely flowering habit, larger size of the flowers (up to 2.25 cms. across the expanded sepals), but most particularly by its distinctive, remarkably spathulate labellum, the linear disc of which is sharply dilated into a concave, broad-ovate, apical lamina. Dockrill and St. Cloud.

Var. *spathulatum*

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FOUR TREE FERNS OF THE PALUMA RANGE

By KEITH KENNEDY, Townsville

OF the various tree ferns growing in Australia, at least half are found in North Eastern Queensland, and some are endemic to that region.

A tree fern is simply a fern in which the rhizome, instead of creeping under or above the ground, has developed an upright or dendroid habit similar to the upright growth of a tree. Some species, instead of growing straight up, lie prostrate for part of their length then turn upwards, indicating the evolution from the prostrate rhizome to the erect. This method of growth is known botanically as procumbent, and can be seen normally in *Dicksonia antarctica* Labill, of temperate Australia, but in North Queensland, as far as I know, the tree ferns are all erect. In New Zealand, there is a procumbent tree fern, *Cyathea colensoi*, in which the caudex for part of its length is prostrate and sends down roots like a giant rhizome, the remainder of the caudex then turns upwards and rises to three or four feet.

On these ferns with a creeping rhizome the fronds can be spaced out, but on an erect rhizome the fronds spring from or near the apex. This produces the basket habit as seen in tufted ferns, and if persisted in the rhizome becomes dendroid, rising from a few to many feet above the ground. *Blechnum cartilagineum* Sw., pentiful near Paluma, is a dwarf example of the dendroid habit, while *Dicksonia youngiae* Moore in the same district is a giant example.

Tree ferns are found only in the eastern part of Australia, where they flourish from the tropical north to the south of Tasmania. This range indicates that it is not entirely temperature that governs the dendroid habit, but conditions such as moisture and forest canopy. Nevertheless, temperature has some influence, for it is a fact that in the tropics they grow only at high elevations, while down south they grow at sea level.

The dendroid habit can be assumed by different genera, but in North Queensland the majority of the tree ferns belong to the genus *Cyathea*.

The most prevalent tree growing around the township of Paluma is *Cyathea rebecca* (F. Muell.) Domin., named by Baron von Mueller after a lady friend. It is only found in North Queensland, and is essentially a tropical fern. I do not know of any record of it being found outside Australia. It is only bipinnate, so has not the fine-cut appearance of other tree ferns. The pinnules vary from entire, slightly incised, to deeply incised. The bases of the fronds are persistent for about a third of the way down the caudex, the remainder of the caudex is clear. It is soboliferous, and in many examples several shoots arise from the base, presenting the appearance of a cluster of ferns.

On the range not far from Cloudy Clearing is a start of the light green *Cyathea robertsoniana* (F. Muell.) Domin., which can be readily identified by the tripinnate fronds, the pinnules of which are minutely and thickly villous, and feel like thin flannel to the touch. Generally, the light leaved plants cannot endure the sun's rays so much as those with darker leaves, but actually in this case, *C. robertsoniana* can endure sunlight better than the coarser leaved *C. rebecca*. The reason for this is the finer ultimate pinnules which offer a smaller surface to the sun, and the villous covering which acts as protection and also checks evaporation. The fronds do not form a true crown, but are somewhat distantly spaced on the end of the stem, which is probably an inheritance from the times when the caudex was prone. The ultimate pinnules are lobed almost to the costule, and the lobes are toothed. On the fertile pinnules, the sori are sunk in depressions, one on each tooth, the distal end of which curves over slightly to form a

partial false indusium.

Not far from the turn-off near Star Valley View is a fine specimen of *Cyathea cooperi* (F. Muell.), once known as *C. brownii* Domin. Hidden in dense forest, I came across it by accident. Not so common here as elsewhere in the North, it can be identified by the few dried fronds attached to the caudex just below the crown. These fronds can be easily detached.

Dicksonia youngiae Moore is also not common in the district. Although a tree fern, it has no relationship to the family Cyatheaceae, but belongs to the family Pteridaceae. The sori of Cyatheaceae are dorsal, and either exindusiate or have a very partial indusium, but the *Dicksonias* have sori which are marginal with large two-lipped indusia. One lip is a false indusium, formed by the overlapping of the pinnule edge, the other lip is a true indusium arising from the surface of the pinnule. Another difference between *Cyatheas* and *Dicksonias* is that the stipe bases of the latter are covered with hairs or bristles, while the former have scales or ramenta and only sometimes hairs.

Tree ferns are not of economic use, their value is aesthetic, but they have been utilised for various purposes, as I saw once in Gippsland, Victoria, where a corduroy road over swampy land was made by placing tree fern trunks side by side. When in New Zealand I was informed that the ancient Maoris used to bake the pith and lower part of the stipes of *C. medularis*, called by them the ponga, the result being said to taste like rather poor quality apples. According to a medical authority the same species furnishes a gum that can be used as a vermifuge, but it is not often used.

NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALISTS' CLUB

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

MEETINGS

- 14th AUGUST, 1956: It was decided to support the North Queensland Local Authorities' Association in the appointment of a full time ranger under the Fauna Protection Act.
- 11th SEPTEMBER, 1956: Annual General Meeting. Presidential Address was read by Mr. A. A. Read. Officers elected were President, Mr. A. A. Read; Vice Pres., Dr. H. Flecker, Mr. S. Dean, Sgt. H. Ziegenfusz; Hon. Sec., J. Wyer; Asst. Sec., D. R. Peiniger; Committee, Messrs B. Cummings, E. Fielder, N. Coleman; Hon. Treas., Mrs. H. Smith.
- Mr. S. Dean moved that the club sponsor an exhibit for the Trades and Industries Fair in Oct., 1956, to make known the N.Q. Native Flora Preservation Society. Mr. S. Dean also suggested that action be taken to limit the use of .22 sporting rifles except for properly authorised purposes.

- 9th OCTOBER, 1956: The H. Flecker Natural History Medallion was presented to Miss Yvonne Henderson, of Edmonton. Exhibits included live dragon lizard, *Gonyocephalus boydi*; Barbel tortoise, *Emydura longicollis*, and python, *Liasis childreni*, also alive, etc.
- 13th NOVEMBER, 1956:
- 25th NOVEMBER, 1956: Excursion to Mr. R. Fenby's farm property at Clump Point, 30 miles east of El Arish. The weather was particularly fine and the outing most enjoyable. Mr. Fenby has for many years succeeded in preserving his rain forest estate. Of particular interest was a tall cycad, *Macrozamia hopei*, well over seventy feet high. A tame cassowary roamed over the property, visiting the homestead to partake of chopped up coconuts which it greedily devoured.
- 11th DECEMBER, 1956: Toward the close of the meeting, it was reported that two people were stung at the City Baths by Irukandji. A team from the club decided to strain the water while letting it out to look for organisms which might be responsible. The result was a large collection of plankton which turned out to be barnacle larvae and which are probably not responsible for the stings.

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members were elected and welcomed:—

- 11th SEPTEMBER, 1956: Messrs V. M. Reilly, Box 136, Cairns; D. A. Pritchard, Holmes St., Stratford.
- 13th NOVEMBER, 1956: Dr. J. W. Markwell, Lynch St., Ingham; Messrs R. L. Shepherd, Box 379, Ingham; Bert Yeldham, Box 190, Ingham.
- 11th DECEMBER, 1956: Mr. Crichton, Mulgrave Shire Council, Gordonvale; Mr. A. J. Castle, Mrs. A. J. Castle, David Castle (Junior Member), all of Passchendale St., Stratford.

PUBLICATIONS BY N.Q. NATURALISTS' CLUB

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2. MARKETABLE FISH OF THE CAIRNS AREA PRICE 1/-
3. CHECK LIST OF NORTH QUEENSLAND FERNS PRICE 1/-
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7. CHECK LIST OF NORTH QUEENSLAND ORCHIDS
(Second Edition) PRICE 2/6