

# The North Queensland Naturalist

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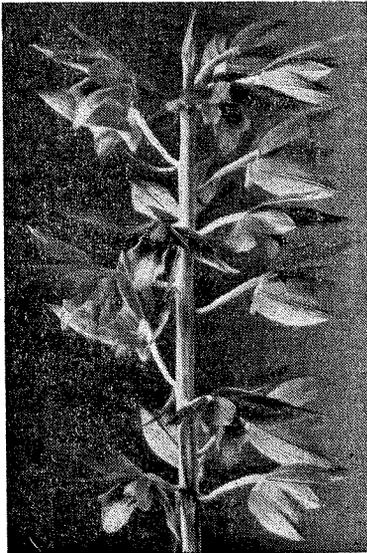
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## *Eulophia Carrii* C. T. White

By H. FLECKER, F.R.G.S.A.



*Eulophia carrii* C. T. White

This terrestrial orchid was originally described by C. T. White in his Contributions to the Queensland Flora, No. 5 (Proc. of the R. Soc. of Queensland), and read before the Royal Society of Queensland, 26th August, 1935, from specimens sent to him by T. Carr from Julatten, N.Q. The only note given other than the description is "The present species is easily distinguished from the two previously described leafless species

of *Eulophia* by its dark vinous purple flowers."

Neither *Eulophia venosa* Reichb. f. nor *E. fitzalanii* F. Muell. are common, the former being occasionally found in the coastal rain forest as at Cape Tribulation and Yarrabah, and the latter has been found at Mount Dryander in the Proserpine District.

A communication from T. Carr, dated 5.1.1952, records that it flowered for Mr. Taylor, Orchid

Importer, Sydney, many years ago. Mr. Carr had it flowering freely each year at Rumula and at one time it was plentiful around this area. It does best in rotting wood. What appeared to be the healthiest plants are found in decaying Northern Silky Oak, *Cardwellia sublimis*. He had never seen it growing outside of a very small area of about one square mile around Rumula. The area has now been completely cleared and grassed or cultivated.

For some fourteen years or so, which had elapsed since the original description, nobody appears to have collected a second sample until 1951 when J. A. Kenyon, of Cairns, brought in a specimen with brown flowers, 23 inches in height, without any leaves, growing in red soil at North Johnstone about a mile

south of Lake Eacham, far removed from the Julatten and Rumula area. H. M. E. Rupp reports that it is doubtless the same orchid according to White's description and probably larger than Carr's specimen, for the measurements of the floral segments somewhat exceed those given by him. Otherwise, the floral structure agrees perfectly with White's description.

Later, some bulbs of this orchid from the North Johnstone area were secured by J. A. Kenyon and planted in the ground in the fernery beneath the front verandah at Digger Street, North Cairns. During Christmas week, 1951, it shot up a big spike, as illustrated above, about two feet high, containing 17 brownish coloured florets. The plant has not re-appeared in succeeding years.

## Report On The "Min Min" Light

By G. B. M. TERRIS, Cairns

The light, which was white, attained a brilliance exceeding by some 200 per cent. any of the planetary bodies observed at the time. The brilliance was not constant and at times when it appeared to fade a little a bright red flash formed part of it. The light moved in irregular circles and spirals though sometimes straight upwards to an estimated 1000 feet and then downwards almost to the ground. The phenomenon was observed for ten minutes and was last seen disappearing into the ground. The light, when first seen, was thought to come from an aircraft, but its motion was faster than an airliner could manoeuvre.

Location: From a point 70 miles west of Camooweal, between Avon Downs and Soudan, Barkly Tableland, Northern Territory, the light was observed at a bearing N.N.E. approximately half a mile distant.

Type of Country: Heavily grassed (Mitchell and Flinders)

black soil plains. Trees sparse.

Time: Tuesday, 5th May, 1953, at 11 p.m.

Weather: Cloudless sky; moon, last quarter; wind, light westerly; temperature approximately 60 degrees F.

The Name: The light is known quite well locally as the "Min Min" light. Extensive enquiries were made but not one person approached had actually seen the light. The fact that such a light did appear at rare intervals was, however, generally accepted. Natives at Mataranka, on the edge of the Arnhem Land Reservation, could offer no solution, would not confirm its existence, nor would they interpret the name "Min Min."

It is alleged that a party of scientists once camped on the Barkly Tableland to investigate the light, but during their stay it was not observed. It was also stated that men had chased the light across the plain on horse-back, but the light always seem-

ed to be the same distance ahead of them.

Witnesses: H. J. Bell, 274 Draper Street, Cairns; G. B. W. Terris, 2 Thomas Street, Cairns.

Reports of the Min Min light have been made before, but no satisfactory explanation appears to have been given. Occasionally, spontaneous combustion of methane, etc., had given rise to short lived lights, and as there are many bores in the district, this seems a possibility.

### NOTE BY EDITOR

In a recent lecture by Professor Prentice, electrical engineer, on the protection of industrial equipment against lightning, which was actually a report of research being carried out in his department, he showed that there were definite storm tracks, the reasons for which were at pres-

ent unknown. The greater number of reports of ball lightning, fire balls, etc., can be dismissed, but there are a few accounts by accredited observers which as yet have not been explained by any ordinary means. Professor Prentice suggested that if there is anything in the ball lightning idea, then it could be possible that an intense and concentrated ionization field formed at the junction of the cloud to earth, and ground to cloud ionised paths of a pre-lightning flash. Now if this Min Min Light area is one of these storm tracks, this might be an explanation on some of these times, but from the above record, this is doubted.

It is desired to learn whether there are good records of lightning to earth flashes in the area of the Min Min Lights.

## Vale Aborigines Of The Bunya

By RHYS

I cannot say this is unexpected, have I not often wondered why amongst death I have been spared so long. Was it because in my battle with the elements I was partly crippled, my fight with those forces made doubly hard by the loss of good company, once at hand on every side?

In days gone by, the blacks from the River country would visit these parts every Bunya nut season. I was only a stripling then.

How their piccaninies laughed when they found a nut cone on the ground. The young men climbed the trees, tumbling cones down for the gins to gather.

From here the men would scan the low country to the east of the Range, where a hostile tribe roamed. Strange these seaside blacks seldom ventured to the top, or the mountain blacks to the low country. The steep range side was as a no-man's land.

From my point of vantage might be seen the ocean to the east, and the far flung ranges to the west, and from here the old blacks watched the coming of the white man.

With their beetling brows contracted, they watched him leave the coast, venture to the foothills, climb the spurs, reaching the top. Finding this to their liking, these pale faces soon appeared in numbers, and in no time were devastating the land. Denuding it of the forest, they made great scars on the earth, on which to plant their puny trees, where once hoary giants reigned supreme.

They came with their animals, strange to this country, long the habitat of the wallaby, bandicoot and dingo. Then came their wheeled vehicles, hitched to their animals.

Here where the blacks were happy in their gnyas or with none, these whites built themselves great mis-mias, and where

piccaninnies were wont to play, now the white children ran.

Now as the murderer approaches, axe in hand, I know my hour is come, and I will go

to join my forebears who, by the grace of God, lived in this land through the ages, before the white plague called civilisation. And so a storm wrecked Gum Tree passes. Vale.

## Preservation Of Reptiles

By WILLIAM HOSMER

The general interest in snakes has been gradually increasing since the recent publicity given to Australia's deadliest snake, the taipan. Specimens, living and dead, come from many localities in the north for positive identification. Unfortunately, many of the specimens are badly preserved, and consequently have to be discarded instead of being retained in the ever growing museum collection. Quite recently a python, four feet long, was coiled tightly into a coffee jar and covered with methylated spirits, then transported many miles before reaching Cairns. If the sender of that python had been at the receiving end, I am sure that he would appreciate a few hints on the correct procedure for permanent preservation. The following method will be found most satisfactory. Although a little more complicated than the procedure above, if the specimen is worth the trouble of preservation and shipment at all, then it is worth the care necessary for permanent storage as a museum specimen.

Specimens are best killed by drowning them in the preserving fluid, keeping them submerged in a cloth bag, or by injecting a little preservative in the region of the heart with a hypodermic syringe. Other methods not known to me are probably as effective, or even more so, but whichever form is used, take care not to damage the specimen, particularly the head, as damaged specimens are difficult to check.

After killing the specimen, it is essential to inject preservative

into the belly, starting from the tail and gradually working up the body to the neck, when fluid begins to run from the mouth, indicating that sufficient preservative has been injected. Should a syringe not be available for this purpose, a number of small slits may be made with a razor blade to ensure entry of the preservative into the body cavity. These slits should be made transversely to the belly scales, and should be about half as long as the interspaces between each, but take note that one or two slits are also necessary in the tail of any specimen exceeding two feet in length. Having completed this portion of the operation, place the specimen UPSIDE DOWN in a tray or dish of adequate space and cover with the preserving fluid. Force out as much air as possible by running the fingers along the belly pressing down from the tail end first. It should be noted that air pockets in the stomach are the chief cause of decomposition in preserved specimens, hence the removal of air is of prime importance. This having been thoroughly accomplished, arrange the specimen (still belly side up), in a suitable position, and allow to remain for a few hours. When re-examined, the specimen should be partly set, or stiffened.

The next procedure is to decide on a suitable container. A wide-mouthed jar or bottle will be found best; a fruit preserving bottle or pickle jar is ideal. The specimen should be carefully placed within so that there is no pressure of the body on the glass, and there should be an

amount of preservative sufficient in proportion to the bulk of the specimen.

Next comes the most important part of the whole operation, so important indeed, that without it, the specimen loses its value. This is the "tagging" or labelling of the specimen. The rarest specimen in the State is of little value from a scientific aspect if unaccompanied by the necessary data. This very simple matter is often omitted. The necessary data required is:-

1. Locality in which the specimen was collected, which may be rendered for instance as 2 miles north of Hartley Creek, or 3 miles west of Smithfield Post Office, etc.
2. Date of collection, and if space permits, time of day when such was collected.
3. Collector's name, all of which should be written in ordinary pencil on card or piece of paper with other particulars and placed INSIDE the container. Outside labels are quite frequently lost, torn or damaged, and may become illegible. If two or more specimens are included in the one container attach the label to each specimen by threading cotton through one

of the belly scales and tying label securely.

Regarding the type of preservative to use, the most common and easiest to procure is methylated spirit. Ethyl or grain alcohol is the preservative mostly used by museums for permanent storage, but the high cost of this fluid places it out of the reach of most private collectors. Formalin is very economical since it should be broken down to 1 part formalin to 8 or 9 parts of water for most specimens. The chief disadvantages of formalin are that it hardens the specimen, thus making examination difficult, whilst it causes the eyes of the person making the examination to run and smart. The heads, or rather the head and two or three inches of neck are best preserved in cases where the specimen is too bulky for preservation of the whole body.

Once well preserved, the spirit may be emptied out of the container, and spirit moistened rag or absorbent cotton packed around the specimen for transporting purposes. Any collector wishing to have specimens identified should forward them to Dr. H. Flecker, 52 Abbott Street, Cairns, or to me at 2 McLeod St., Cairns North.

## Length Of Python

By S. DEAN, Cairns

Having received the loan of a book dealing with Australian Reptiles by Charles Barrett, I was interested in the chapter dealing with pythons and their reputed lengths and noted, according to measurements, that our North Queensland Rock Python, *Liasis amethystinus*, is rated fourth in length of this family. This has prompted me to recount an experience which might interest readers.

Although not a student of herpetology, I have had close contact with quite a wide variety

of snakes during my thirty years' residence in Far North Queensland, working in the bush and in the cane fields. Some time ago, when the Barron Falls hydro-electric scheme was under construction, and in connection with which I was employed, I had acquired some reputation in the treatment and preservation of snake skins. In fact, about that time I had presented a beautifully coloured and marked skin to the then Secretary of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A., Mr. F. Mazlin. Returning to the job on the

"midnight horror," which train arrived at Bradshaw's siding about 3 a.m., Monday, after a week-end spent in Cairns, I was informed en route by a fellow workman that there was a python awaiting me at the Falls, which had been captured on the previous Saturday morning. Despite my own different estimate, he maintained that its length was fully twenty-four feet.

Up to that time, I had many experiences with *Liasis amethystinus*, but the longest I had encountered hitherto was twenty to twenty-one feet. A modest bet of five shillings was made. Before breakfast, with a borrow-

ed surveyor's tape, we visited the python, which was draped over the ridge pole of a vacant tent site, and despite its odour, stretched it out to its full length, and it was found to measure twenty-three feet eight and a half inches, and as it was only three and a half inches short of his claim, we split the bet and I parted with two shillings and six pence, but owing to its decomposition and the very rough and scaling condition of its skin, having been carried over very rough terrain, with a shovel it was consigned to earth. I cannot say whether this is a record, but it is the largest of which I am acquainted.

### Herpetologists' League Of North Queensland

Monthly meetings are held on the First Monday in each month at "Coraline," 57 Grove St., Cairns. The officers are:

President: William Hosmer.  
Hon. Treas.: Alfred A. Read.  
Hon. Sec.: J. McLoughlin.

### Elevated Kitchen Middens Of Konkandji People

By H. FLECKER, F.R.G.S.A.

Douglas Seaton has described in a short article entitled Rock Paintings of the Konkandji People (N.Q. Naturalist, No. 101, June, 1952, p.19), two collections of rock paintings in Brown Bay. The floors of both were evidently kitchen middens and abundant remains are still present to testify to this fact. One of them, however, is situated in the rain forest fully three hundred feet above sea level, necessitating a considerable climb from the beach. Most of the remains consist of discarded marine shell remains, particularly window shell (*Placuanome*), other oysters, mussels, *Venerupis* and other bivalves as well as many gasteropods such as *Natica*, *Nerita*, *Cerithium*, *Turbo* and the like, all collected from the sea. A few nuts were present and

were recognised as the shells of the fruit of *Cycas media*, a quandong, *Elaeocarpus bancroftii* and the small, hard wooden seeds of a small rosy fruit, undetermined, resembling somewhat a rather large red currant in appearance.

Although kitchen middens are plentiful enough somewhat above sea level, I am unaware that any such containing predominantly marine material have been found at a considerable elevation and can offer no theory as to why the Konkandji people should have carried their sea food to such a height instead of consuming them on the beach or some shelter nearby. Possibly, it was the only available shelter from the teeming rain during the wet season.

### North Queensland Naturalists' Club

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

#### MEETINGS

8th September, 1953: Annual General Meeting. Annual report read by retiring President, Mr. A. A. Read, was adopted. Election of officers resulted: President, Mr. A. A. Read; Hon. Sec., J. Wyer; Hon. Assist. Sec. and Librarian, D. R. Peiniger; Organising Sec. for outings, W. Hosmer; Vice-Presidents, Dr. H. Flecker, A. B. Cummings, G. Atkinson; Hon. Treas., Mrs. Saunders; Additional Members of Committee, Mrs. A. Read, C. Cantrill, Mrs. H. Smith, Constable Ziegenfusz, J. McLoughlin, L. J. Robichaux.

13th October, 1953: Agreed to send two representatives to the monthly meetings of the New Settlers' League, Flecker Natural History Medallion presented to Keith Barry for observations on Green Tree Ants.

10th November, 1953: Mr. J. H. Pateman gave an enjoyable talk on "Eye Aids to Study," showing the value of microscopes in creating more exact knowledge, more interest and thus revealing new worlds.

8th December, 1953: Mr. St. Cloud gave a talk on his experience of growing *Dendrobium elobatum*, which showed in the first flowering a uniform kind of flower; in the second flowering, a different type; and in the third, a mixture of both.

Visit of members of R.A.O.U.

17th September. A conversation was arranged at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Read, and the visitors were shown over the great private collection of the President and Mrs. Read. The function was very enjoyable.

18th September: The members of the R.A.O.U. exhibited coloured slides of their outings in Central Australia, including Ayre Rock and other notable spots.

#### EXCURSIONS

8th October: Davies Creek and Tinaroo Range. A taipan was captured alive but died from injuries produced thereby. The rooting system of the giant orchid *Galeola* was particularly noted.

8th November, 1953: Cairns Intake and Visit to Crystal Waters.

6th December: Pebbly Beach on Cook Highway was well attended.

10th January: Brown Bay. Visits made to aboriginal paintings and kitchen middens there proved especially interesting. Why did aboriginals carry marine shells 300 feet above sea level into rain forest?

#### NEW MEMBERS ELECTED

11th August: N. C. Coleman, Pyne St., Edmonton; E. Markham, Box 110, Cairns.

8th September: Miss Birgit Nilsson, Redlynch; Mrs. T. Burkitt, 91 Grafton St., Cairns.

13th October: M. J. Lloyd, 36 Bellerine St., Geelong, V.; G. L. Burch, 2 Hermitage Rd., Geelong, V.; A. Davis, 5 Loeven St., Cairns; A. Christiansen, 203 Buchanan St., Cairns; K. I. Barry (junior member), 405 Draper St., Cairns; R. J. Horrell, 2 Mackenzie St., Cairns; J. Prince, 2 Mackenzie St., Cairns; Mrs. J. Prince, 2 Mackenzie St., Cairns; H. C. Wickett, 181 Sheridan St., Cairns; L. MacDonald, Bank of N.S.W., Cairns.

10th November, 1953: K. A. McPherson, Box 51, Proserpine; J. H. Pateman, Mill Rd., Edmonton; F. E. Gunther, Main Highway, Edmonton.

## The Townsville And District Naturalists' Club.

The Townsville and District Naturalists' Club meets on the first Friday of the month in the Adult Education Centre Lecture Rooms, Wickham Street, Townsville. President, Mr. K. Kennedy, Esplanade and Rose Street, Kissing Point. Hon. Secretary, Elizabeth Kennedy, Townsville.

### MEETINGS AND FIELD DAYS

May, 1953: The meeting took the form of a members' night. Miss Nancy Hopkins spoke on her recent visit to the Mt. Spec rain forest and described the birds observed on that day. For the botanical section of the meeting Mr. Kennedy exhibited and described a North Queensland fern (*Polypodium Brownii*) and showed a new method of making fern baskets.

The field day was to be a members' field day.

June, 1953: The lecture was given by Mr. K. Kennedy, who spoke on the ferns of Mt. Spec, saying that North Queensland was as remarkable for its fern vegetation as Tasmania and New Zealand, and that the Mt. Spec district had its fair share of **Pteridophytes**. The speaker described some of the ferns he had observed there. He described the giant *Angiopteris evecta* and species of tree ferns (*Cyathea*) down to the fragile, filmy ferns of the dark ravines. Pictures of ferns were thrown on to the screen and a number of hanging baskets were displayed and their peculiarities pointed out.

Field day was to Pallarenda.

July, 1953: The **Hymenophyllaceae** lecture was given by Mr. G. J. Tofler, the subject of his talk was "Over the Bogong High Plains in Summer Time." The plateau of Mt. Bogong is in the Victorian Alps, and the speaker told of a hiking trip through this region. He explained the geological formation of the mountain and surrounding country, and many things of natural history interest, also the ways of reaching the mountain. A number of photographs taken by the lecturer illustrated this very interesting talk.

Field day to the Gorge (Pallarenda).

August, 1953: The meeting took the form of a discussion on

World Bird Day. The object of the district lists movement, which has its headquarters in Melbourne, is to ascertain as far as possible the distribution of bird life in Australia at a given time, so as to obtain data of relative abundance and migration. The time allotted for this year was between 16th and 30th August. During the meeting, several members spoke of bird life generally and arranged amongst themselves to make reports from various parts of the Townsville district, the results of which would be read at the next meeting of the Club.

The field day was to Kissing Point, Mt. St. John Zoo, and the Town Common.

September, 1953: The meeting being the annual general meeting, the election of officers and general business was the order of the night. As there were no nominations, the retiring Committee was re-elected to hold office for the coming year. The President read his report on the activities of the Club during the year, then the evening was given over to the reading of bird lists compiled by members on World Bird Day, prior to them being despatched to Melbourne.

Field day to the Town Common.

October, 1953: The lecturer was Mr. C. Bryant, Editor of the magazine "Emu." He spoke on the recent R.A.O.U. camp at Lake Barrine, and of the birds he had observed there and at Dunk Island, and also about the formation and distribution of flesh on birds that fly and those that have been flightless for ages.

Mr. Bryant also described a beautiful collection of transparencies, which were thrown on to the screen, of Central Australia. These transparencies were taken by Mr. Bryant and by Mrs. Bryant at the last bird camp of the R.A.O.U.