

Ufa

North Queensland Naturalist

The Journal and Magazine of the North Queensland Naturalists' Club.

Vol. VI.

CAIRNS, 1st DECEMBER, 1937.

No. 52

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 December, 1937.

Address by Mr. B. O. Balfe: "Care of Native Animals in Captivity."

REPORTS OF MEETINGS:

6th September, 1937.

Annual General Meeting.
Annual Address by President, Dr. H. Flecker, entitled "Nomenclature, Vernacular and Biological."
Election of Officers.

New Members elected:

Rev. Kernke, Yarrabah.
Mr. R. V. Oldham, Pt. Moresby.
Mr. S. Simpson, Cairns.
Mr. H. Howard, Babinda.
Mr. Geo. Sibley, Gordonvale.
Mrs. J. A. L. Sides, Watsonville.

6th October, 1937.

Mr. Tom Tennant, Editor of Viewpoint, Townsville, gave a lecture entitled "Blackfellow from Early Times in Australia."

Announcement.

Messrs. N. H. Seward Pty, Ltd., of 457 Bourke Street, Melbourne, are offering a helpful book, "WHAT BUTTERFLY IS THAT?" by G. A. Waterhouse, for 5/- plus postage. The usual price of it is 12/6. The book covers the butterflies of Australia and is useful as a reference book when classifying specimens.

Miss Neuhaeuser exhibited a collection of skins of marsupials and rodents collected around Ravenshoe.

8th November, 1937.

Mr. Moase gave a lecture, illustrated by photographs, entitled "Uses of Animal Photography."

BIRDS ON THE TIDAL FLATS AT CAIRNS.

By A. J. MORAN.

Some of the wading birds remain on the sea-front at Cairns year in and year out—others just call in for a rest and sup on their great migratory flight to and from Siberia, where they go every year to breed on the plains of Russia, where the melting snow and ice uncover food in plenty. Some of the birds upon their return flight go no farther than Cairns, others continue on as far as

New Zealand. How they find their way across the Tasman's thousand miles of ocean is only one of the wonders of Nature that make us think.

There are fifty Australian birds included in the important order of Waders and most of them are similar to the birds frequenting other parts of the globe, as shore conditions all over the world are somewhat alike. Twenty-eight

of these birds are considered visitors to Australia and at least twenty-three call at Cairns and most of this number are here now—having arrived only last month (October) from their long Northern flight. The Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*), a lovely little bird in brown with golden spots is here, having arrived somewhat late, also the Australian Dottrel (*Peltohyas australis*) and the Little Whimbrel (*Mesoscolopax minatus*); all looking very tired indeed. They may have been delayed by the trouble in Mongolia!

The Sea Curlews, Snipes and Godwits appear to have stood the journey much better.

The Black-fronted Dottrel (*Charadrius melanops*) is especially busy hunting for food and turning over pieces of bark, etc., at a great rate. He is very hungry and is not so fortunate as the Sea Curlew (*Numenius cyanopus*) and the two Stilts whose long-pointed bill is tipped with nerves so sensitive they can detect food quickly in the soft mud.

The White-Headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*) is a very infrequent visitor and only once during twelve years have I seen it here.

A solitary Black Oyster-Catcher (*Haematopus unicolor*) called only once during my observations.

The Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*) is the very common graceful bird that you all know so well. It was just as beautiful in the harbour at Singapore and Kobe as it is at Cairns. He is not so well-behaved as he appears. I saw these birds stealing the eggs of noddies and terns at Michaelmas Cay. He is the only real scavenger on the flat and will eat anything. This is the only gull we have in Cairns, but 25 years ago the Pacific Gull (*Gabianus pacificus*) was resident here in large numbers. The Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne Caspia*) is not plentiful, but nevertheless always here. It is a shy bird and takes shrimps from the surface of the water as it flies over the inlet.

The White-faced Ternlet (*Sterna nereis*) is often in the harbour, especially when there are showers of rain about. This dainty little bird dives at fish from a height of 50 feet—it hovers

in the air like a sparrow hawk. It lays a single egg on the bare, hot rocky islands near the South Barnard Island. There are two other terns nesting on Michaelmas Cay which have only been here once when they were blown in during the cyclone twelve years ago. The Frigate Bird (*Fregata minor*) was also blown at this time and took refuge on the railing of the old City Baths. The late Charles Hedley noticed terns with broken wings on the beach at Green Island and was worried to know the reason and, after careful observation, saw the frigate bird in the act high up in the sky. When the tern would not disgorge fish quickly enough this robber quickly dislocated the wing.

I have got away from the waders and space will not permit me to go much longer. Why not some interested lover of nature list these mud flat dwellers and note their time of arrival and departure? The information is useful and the study fascinating. With an ordinary pair of binoculars the bird is brought quite close and colours are easily picked out. Nature study has gone ahead in leaps and bounds in schools and especially the branch dealing with birds. The Gould Society of Bird Lovers is well established throughout Australia—their objects are:—

- (1) To protect all birds except those that are noxious.
- (2) To prevent the unnecessary collection of wild birds' eggs.
- (3) To disseminate knowledge regarding our birds and to help members, teachers and others to identify them.
- (4) To secure the general use of one common name for each bird.
- (5) To cultivate a more friendly attitude towards birds by fostering an intelligent interest in them and their habits.
- (6) To encourage the formation of bird sanctuaries.

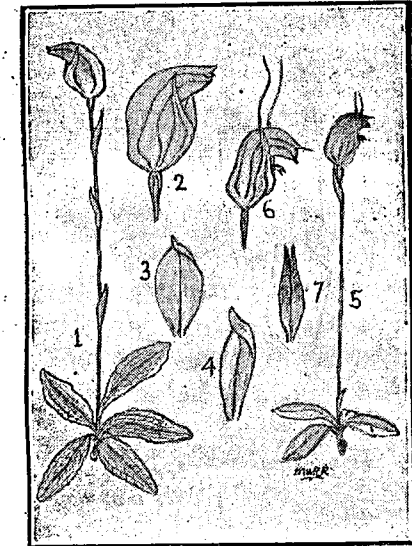
And remember Ruskin said:—

"All the best things and treasures of this world are not to be produced by each generation for itself; but we are all intended, not to carve our work in snow that will melt, but each and all of us to be continually rolling a great white gathering snowball, higher and higher; larger and larger, along the alps of human power."

PHREATIA BAILEYANA (Bail.) Schltr.

By the REV. H. M. R. RUPP.

I gave a brief description of this diminutive orchid in the September number of this Journal, under the name *Oberonia pusilla* Bail. I remarked on its dissimilarity to other Australian species, although the individual flower seemed to me very like that of *O. iridifolia*, Lindl. It is "microscopic" in dimensions, and as I was unaware that Bailey's determination had been challenged, perhaps I did not make the best use of the limited material available for critical examination. Dr. R. S. Rogers writes under date 8/10/37: "Bailey placed the plant in the 'wrong genus' and in 1903, Rolfe referred it to *Phreatia*. Thus in that year it became *Phreatia pusilla* (Bail.) Rolfe. Later still, Schlechter discovered that Rolfe's name had already been appropriated for another plant, and again changed the name to *P. Baileyana* (Bail.) Schltr. (See Fedde Repert. spec. IX, (1911) 433.) Rolfe's transfer will be found in Orch. Rev. XI (1903) 344."



1. *Pt. curta*, plant of the North Queensland form.
2. Larger sketch of flower, side view.
3. Labellum, front.
4. Labellum of type form.
5. *Pt. ophioglossa*, var. *collina*, plant.
6. Larger sketch of flower.
7. Labellum.

PTEROSTYLIS CURTA, R.Br.

The plate was inadvertently omitted from the notes of this plant by the Rev. H. M. R. Rupp, on p. 3 of the issue for March, 1937, Vol. V, No. 49, and is given herewith.

DENDROBIUM FLECKERI.

By the Rev. H. M. R. RUPP.

This species, which was described, figured, and named in the "Queensland Naturalist" Vol. X, No. 2 (1936), certainly merits some notice in the journal of the North Queensland Naturalists' Club, since it was discovered by Dr. Flecker in 1936 in the Upper Mossman

River jungle in the vicinity of Mount Spurgeon. A flowering plant sent to me in October, 1936, by Mr. C. T. White, the Queensland Government Botanist, settled any doubts in my mind as to whether this *Dendrob* could be placed in any known Australian species;

24
V6 # 52

and Mr. White agreed with my suggestion that it be named after its discoverer, who had previously forwarded a similar specimen. The flowers on Mr. White's plant, though in fairly good condition, had lost something of their colour in the long journey from Cairns to Raymond Terrace (N.S.W.); but this I did not realise until quite recently. The plant is now flowering (Nov. 1937) in my bush-house. I described the sepals as "pale yellowish-green"; but in the fresh state they are a rich apricot. The densely-ciliate labellum, with its purplish-red markings, framed in the setting of apricot sepals, gives this orchid

a very distinctive and beautiful appearance. It is quite an acquisition to our orchid flora, and is worthy of a place in any collection. No perfume was perceptible in the much-travelled flowers last year, but actually *D. Fleckeri* has a strong and pleasing fragrance.

D. Carrii from the same locality, which was described and named at the same time, has not done as well at Raymond Terrace as its companion; but it appears now to be fairly acclimatised, and I hope it may produce flowers next season. The flowers received last year were withered, and had to be artificially "restored" for descriptive purposes.

SOME FURTHER NOTES ON BIRDS OF THE CAIRNS SEASHORE

By J. G. BROOKS, B.D.Sc.

An article in our Journal of January, 1936, by Mr. E. S. Hanks, of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, prompted me to purchase the book, "What Bird is That," by Neville W. Cayley, F.R.Z.S., so that an endeavour could be made to prepare a check list of the visitors to our water front. Our good friend and member, Mr. A. J. Moran, has since produced an article which includes a number of birds not recorded by Mr. Hanks. Incidentally, he has mentioned a number of the varieties observed by myself, nevertheless there are still many to be mentioned, viz:—

RED-BACKED SEA EAGLE (*Haliastur indus* Boddaert). Also known as White-headed Sea Eagle, Rufous-backed Sea Eagle, Salmon Hawk and Rufous-backed Fish Hawk.

WHITE-HEADED STILT (*Himantopus leucocephalus* Gould). Also known as Pied Stilt Longshanks, Stilt-bird and Long-legged Plover.

MASKED PLOVER (*Lobibyx miles* Boddaert).

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia* Gunnerus).

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Tringa hypoleuca* Linne). Also known as Summer Snipe.

CURLEW-SANDPIPER (*Erolia testacea* Vroeg.). Also known as Pygmy Curlew, Curlew-stint.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica* Linne). Also known as Barred-rump Godwit, Pacific Godwit and Kuaka.

CRESTED TERN (*Sterna bergii* Lichtenstein). Also known as Swift Tern, Ruppell Tern, Bass Strait Tern, Torres Strait Tern and Village Black-smith.

LESSER TERN (*Sterna bengalensis* Lesson).

LITTLE TERN (*Sterna albifrons* Vroeg.). Also known as White-shafted Ternlet, Black-lored Tern and Sea-swallow.

In November, 1936, a small party of five black swans (*Chenopsis atrata*) was noted quietly resting on the mud flat in front of the Cairns foreshore. —(H. Flecker)