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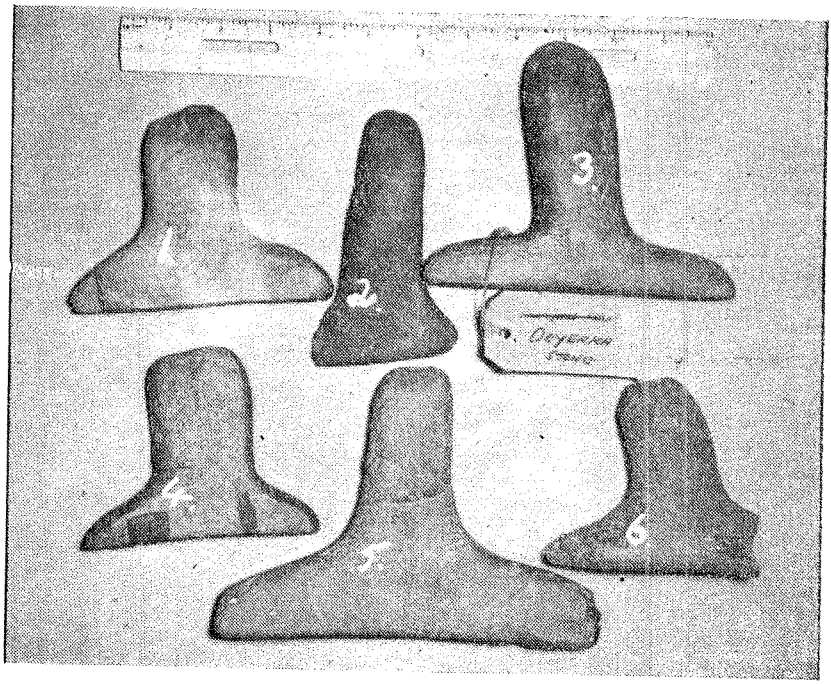
Ooyurkas

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



OOYURKAS
Photo. By Chargois Studios, Cairns
For identity of stones, see text

So far, descriptions of eleven **ooyurkas** have been given by D. A. Casey, F. D. McCarthy, K. Kennedy and G. Mack, which may be summarised in order of their description as follows.

CASEY—

1. National Mus., Melb., dense metamorphic rock, heavily patinated, from Mena Creek, G. Kemlin.

2. National Mus., Melb., fine rained schist, slightly patinated, rom Mena Creek, G. Kemlin.

3. Australian Mus., Sydney, schist, heavily patinated, from near Cairns.

4. Q. Mus., Bris., probably basalt, from Johnstone R., Innisfail, H. Tryon, 2.12.1897.

McCARTHY—

5. Australian Mus., Syd., fine grained slate, polished all over, from Mena Creek, G. Kimlin.

6. Australian Mus., Syd., igneous stone, surface patinated, hammer dressed and polished, from Mena Creek, G. Kimlin.

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7. Australian Mus., Syd., slate, ground on coarse stone, from Russell River, purchased 1892.

KENNEDY—

8. Personal collection, Townsville, iron stained igneous rock, from Miriwinni, C. Freeman.

9. Collection, J. Popham, Townsville, heavy igneous rock, from Herbert River District, S. Fowler.

MACK—

10. Q. Mus., Bris., from Midgenoo, A. B. Skardon, 7.4.1936.

11. Q. Mus., Brisbane, highly metamorphosed volcanic rock, polished and striated, Pawngilly, C. E. Mittelheuser, 31.10.1945.

To the above, seven more are here added and illustrated by photographs. These are:—

12. (No. 1 in photograph, No. 3930 in collection of N. Q. Naturalists' Club). It was collected on the Quamba Estate, Bartle Frere, by Mr. Roy Armstrong, and brought in 17.11.1953. Like all other **ooyurkas** this is of very hard stone, apparently schist. It is damaged to some extent on one of its arms, and also at the extremity of the tang to a lesser degree, the tang being almost perpendicular to the base. The smooth ground edge is almost flat, not bevelled, and except at the extremities, of a uniform thickness. The tang, 45 mm. wide, is much broader than usual, and like the shoulders and summit is uniformly rounded, the shoulder at the base on the damaged side being rather more sloping than on the other side. It measures 131 mm. in length, 101 mm. in height, and weighs 14½ oz.

13. (No. 2 in photograph), is in the possession of Mr. Douglas Seaton, of Cairns, and obtained from the Miriwinni area. It measures 74 mm. in length, 127 in height and 10 mm. in thickness, and weighs only 5½ oz., and is therefore the smallest of the series. Although possessing a high tang, the shoulders are very poorly developed, especially upon one side. Though well rounded upon one side and at the summit of the tang, the other side is poorly finished off.

14. (No. 3 in photograph), is also in the possession of Mr. Douglas Seaton, of Cairns, coming from the same Miriwinni area. It is 160 mm. in length 123 mm. high, and 23 mm. broad, and weighs 15½ oz. The base forms a perfectly straight line, the two shoulders are somewhat symmetrical, but the upright tang has a considerable list to one side. It is smooth and well finished, all borders except the base being evenly rounded off.

15. (No. 4 in photograph), is in the possession of the N.Q. Naturalists' Club and was collected by Mr. Arthur Locke at the Kawadgie Gold Field on the Russell River. Its base forms a very slight concavity and measures 119 mm. in length, and is formed of very hard rock, apparently slate. The shoulders are nearly symmetrical, one being rather longer and more sloping than the other. The tang, however, is much broader than usual, 46 mm., and almost perpendicular to the base, attaining a height of 95 mm. While one side of the tang is almost straight, the other is somewhat convex, the convexity being mostly near the summit of the tang. The stone is fairly well finished with rounded borders, except for the smooth base.

16. (No. 5 of photo), No. 273 of the N.Q. Naturalists' Club collection, is made of hard stone, apparently slate, and is quite the largest of the whole series. Its base is distinctly, but slightly concave and shows scratches from shoulder to shoulder and from front to back, measuring 193 mm. in length, and the tang 133 mm. high, both measurements exceeding all the others, but its thickness is only 16 mm. Its weight is 18 oz., and is the heaviest recorded. The summit of the tang has a feature not noted in any of the other specimens in that it is bevelled both in front and behind presenting a distinct though not sharp straight edge, probably used like a chisel. The tang is almost perpendicular to the base and all other edges except the summit of the tang and base are rounded, but this is somewhat roughly done. The shoulders are nearly equal, but one slopes much more than the other.

17. (No. 6 of photo), is in the possession of the N.Q. Naturalists' Club, was collected by Mr. Tom Carr at the Kawadgie Gold Field on the Russell River. It is of hard stone, apparently schist, but has much of one shoulder broken off and is also somewhat damaged at the apex of the tang. The smooth base is not all in the same plane, thus differing from other specimens, and part of one edge is somewhat rounded. The tang is not only listed towards the unbroken side, but also has a slight curvature to that side. While the broken surface of the shoulder shows a heavier build, the unbroken shoulder is very sloping. All the remaining borders are rounded, and as a whole, the stone is either poorly finished or has been much weathered. Measurements are 105 mm. long, 94 mm. high, weighing altogether 10¾ oz. Its thickness exceeds that of the others by a great deal, measuring 29 mm.

18. This was ploughed up about 1944 on Red Acres Farm, Bartle Frere, in red alluvial soil, and is in the possession of Mr. T. J. Trembath. The stone appears to be schist, weighing 11½ oz. The base is 163 mm. in length, the smooth surface having a very slight concavity. The shoulders are nearly symmetrical, one being slightly more rounded than the other. The height is 101 mm., with the tang almost perpendicular. The summit of the tang and one of the shoulders is a little damaged. The thickness of the tool is 17 mm. On the whole, the implement is not as well finished as many of the above.

19. This has been presented to the collection at the University of Queensland at St. Lucia, by Mr. D. Seaton, who obtained it from Miriwinni. At the moment, it is not available for photograph or description, but the measurements kindly supplied by Dr. L. P. Winterbotham are: "length of handle" 6 inches (152 mm.), and "length across the face" 5¼ inches (132 mm.).

NAME.—The name **ooyurka** is applied to this stone, and is the name as used by the aboriginals as noted by Casey. The name **mena** has been applied by McCarthy, and this is properly rejected by Kennedy on the following grounds:—

(a) Priority. **Ooyurka** is specially mentioned by Casey, and the specimen, presented to the Queensland Museum in 1897, is labelled Whetstone, aboriginal name, **ooyurka.**

(b) **Mena** is an Egyptian name used to commemorate a large military camp near Cairo in 1914-15. The aboriginal name is much to be preferred.

(c) The name **mena** is already pre-occupied in archaeological nomenclature as being the name of a kind of chess played by ancient Egyptians.

Mr. F. D. McCarthy in a recent letter now acknowledges the unsuitability of the name **mena.**

MATERIAL.—This is invariably of hard stone, variously described in different specimens as dense metamorphic rock, fine grained schist, probably basalt, igneous stone, slate. However, the exact geological nature of some of the specimens is not accurately determined.

FORM.—All specimens are made from flat stone, the front and back surfaces being quite flat and fairly smooth. All without exception have a polished base. These stones can best be described as having an upright tang, and two shoulders, one on each side. These are symmetrically placed, the degree of symmetry varying much in different specimens. There is, however, nothing to indicate which is the front or back, and which is the right or left. There is much variation and no two stones are alike. The smallest, No. 13, weighs 5½ oz., and the largest No. 16, 18 oz.

However, No. 7 does not at all correspond to the above description, and it is doubtful whether it should be included. It is figured by McCarthy and is triangular in shape, the base being

depicted above. Each angle would then correspond to a shoulder, and there is no mention of a polished surface so typical of other specimens. Moreover, it is stated that there is no tang. Perhaps the broken end might be regarded as a tang if compared with other specimens. The following descriptions exclude this particular aberrant specimen.

POLISHED BASE.—This is the most characteristic feature of the stone, being present in all cases. The surface is quite smooth, and in some cases it is very difficult to discern any scratches even upon magnification. However, in others, such as No. 16, these are more easily recognised, some running longitudinally from shoulder to shoulder and others directly from front to back, occasionally in both directions upon the same specimen. Sometimes, the surface is almost flat, as in Nos. 12 and 14, in others, a distinct concavity as in Nos. 15 and 16. In thickness it varies from 10 mm. in No. 13 to 29 mm. in No. 17. The polished surfaces are rounded or oval at the extremities of the shoulders but straight in front and behind, with edges fairly sharp or only very slightly rounded or bevelled. The base of No. 17, although polished, is in a somewhat irregular plane.

SHOULDERS.— These are somewhat symmetrical in some cases as in No. 14, but in others, notably Nos. 15 and 16, slopes more on one side than upon the other. However, like the tang, its edges, except at the base, are fairly evenly rounded. In No. 13, the shoulders are very poorly developed.

TANG.—In some cases, the tang is perpendicular or almost so, to the base, as in Nos. 12, 15 and 16, whilst in others it has a distinct list to one side as in Nos. 14 and 17. The last has likewise a slight curvature. In breadth, the tang varies greatly, that of No. 15 being the broadest of the series. The borders are continuous with those of the shoulders and are rounded. Whilst the summits of some of the tangs form an arc of a circle, as in Nos. 13 and 14, others like No. 15, are straight. No. 16 differs from all others in having the summit bevelled with a straight top edge in the form of a chisel.

WORKMANSHIP AND FINISH.—The workmanship and finish are variously described as hammer dressed and ground (Casey), the standard of No. 1 being remarkably high, and 2 and 3 not so well finished. McCarthy regards No. 5 as carefully shaped, and 6 a crudely made example with patches of both hammer dressing and polishing with the surface patinated. No. 11 appears to be the only specimen showing evidence of flaking, which is noted particularly at the concavities between the shoulders and the tang. In practically all cases, except at the base, the edges are fairly evenly rounded from front to back. To sum up, the quality of the work varies considerably.

USE.—Apparently, the only published record of a witness of the use of such implements appears to have been Mr. C. Freeman, who reports having seen an aboriginal use an instrument similar to these for smoothing the handle which he was fitting to an axe head. The appearance of the whole stone supports this idea, the smooth base being used for smoothing and the tang as a handle. The markings on the base of No. 16 suggests that the instrument was moved in both directions, that is, from side to side as well as from before backwards and vice versa. These tools evidently assisted in smoothing the hard wood artifacts fashioned in this area. The locality in which the stones were all found, originally all heavily timbered country, lends support to the use as mentioned above.

LOCATION OF FINDS.—Almost all the stones appear to have been found in clay soil, when the country was being cleared for cultivation for growing sugar. The plough has brought up most. No. 8 was found when digging a hole for fencing. Possibly, the tools were placed in position near trees

from which wooden implements were being fashioned, and the former were then lost or abandoned, and became buried beneath leaves and subsequently mud and clay before being found by early settlers after clearing operations were completed.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.—No. 3 is described as from near Cairns, but this is very vague for no other specimen is found within forty miles of Cairns. The majority come from the fertile valley between the Graham Range on the coast and the Bellenden Ker and Bartle Frere Ranges (of which the summits are the highest in Queensland, being over 5000 feet), west of these. Here the land is fairly low, not much above sea level, and occupied mostly by the Wanjuru tribe of aboriginals.

Thus Nos. 7, 15 and 17 are from the Russell River, 8, 13, 14 and 19 from Miriwinni, 11 from Pawngilly, and 12 and 18 from Bartle Frere. In the Innisfail area, formerly inhabited by the Ma: Mu Tribe, comes No. 4 from the Johnstone River, and 1, 2, 5 and 6 all collected by Mr. G. Kemlin (Casey) or G. Kimlin (McCarthy) at Mena Creek. A little further on, No. 10 was collected at Midgenoo, in the region occupied by the Djiru Tribe, but No. 9, from the Herbert River District is as vague as the Cairns area, being at least fifty miles south of all the others. To sum up, the range is most simply stated as being the narrow belt or valleys between the Russell River and Midgenoo, the latter being a little north of Tully. The tribes manufacturing these implements appear to be the Wanjuru, the Ma:Mu and the Djiru.

COLLECTIONS.—Of the above, Nos. 1 and 2 are in the National Museum, Melbourne, 3, 5, 6 and 7 in the Australian Museum, Sydney, 4, 10 and 11 in the Queensland Museum, Brisbane, 12, 15, 16 and 17 in the collection of the N. Q. Naturalists' Club, Cairns, 13 and 14 in the private collection of D. Seaton, Cairns, 8 in that of K. Kennedy. of Townsville, and 9 of J. Popham, also of Townsville, 13 in that of T. J. Trembath, of Bartle Frere, and 19 in the collection of the University of Queensland.

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MACK, G., Mem. of Queensland Mus., XIII, Pt. I, A Stone Implement from North-east Queensland, Mem. of Queensland Mus., XIII, Pt. I, p. 105.

Breeding Of The Australian Pratincole

By NANCY HOPKINS

The Australian Pratincole or Swallow Plover (**Stiltia isabella**), a migrant from the islands to the north, visits the Townsville Town Common each summer, except when early rains have already made it marshy. The pratincole is a bird of the dry plains, and the Common is usually dry at the time of its arrival, in August or September. Its departure seems to be governed by the rains, which would cause it to retreat to drier areas.

The bird is not readily observed against its normal brownish background, but it is far from drab. Its attractive colouring, largely pale rufous with a deep chestnut band across the abdomen, and its graceful form and movements, make it one of our loveliest birds.

In a note in this magazine

(1st June, 1949), I told of the breeding of a pair of Pratincoles on the Common in 1938. It can be assumed that they breed where they spend the summer, in common with all birds which come to us from a warmer climate, but as they tend to patronise "dry-bog" areas, where an unobtrusive approach is impossible, it is not easy to locate their eggs and young. In 1952, the birds, though often seen, did not appear to settle in the more accessible places, but a pair of chicks was seen in December, after light rains which had probably had the effect of bringing the nesting birds nearer to the road.

This summer, the Pratincoles were unusually plentiful, many near the roads, where a car could be driven much closer to them than a pedestrian could approach. Here, on the 30th September, we surprised a very young pair of chicks, and not far away, the actions of other parents led to the discovery of a newly-hatched chick and an egg, laid on the ground beside a patch of horse dung.

Next day, when I brought a group of visiting R.A.O.U. members to the spot, the egg had hatched, and both chicks were much photographed, while the parents kept up a rather heart-rending distraction display. The first pair of chicks were not seen, but the parents were standing by.

During the next two weeks, all attempts to locate the young birds failed. The presumable parents were present and obviously agitated, but the chicks were well hidden. On the 18th October, a pair of immature birds, which might easily have passed for adults, were seen in the same locality, still guarded by the parents. If they were two of the original chicks they were only three weeks old, but this agrees with my observations on the 1938 bird, which appeared full-grown and flew well at about three weeks. At this stage they were duller than the parents, but in general, the colouring was similar.

By the end of the year, after rain, all pratincoles seemed to have left the Common, so I was surprised to see one on the road as late as the 1st February, when most of the Common was a marsh. Investigation revealed a family group occupying one of the few dry, bare patches of land, apparently a case of late breeding. The young were probably three or four weeks old.

To sum up, it seems safe to conclude that the Common is a regular breeding ground, except in years of early rains, breeding normally being completed before the wet season.

Additions To The North Queensland Bird List

By NANCY HOPKINS

In addition to the birds listed by the North Queensland Naturalists' Club in its 1949 publication, the following have been recorded:

Order Ralliformes: Family Rallidae. Blacktailed Native Hen, **Tribonyx ventralis.** One bird was seen at Mt. St. John, Townsville, in April, 1951, when bird life was prolific after a wet year.

Order Podiciformes: Family Podicipidae. Great Crested Grebe, **Podiceps cristatus.** During the R.A.O.U. camp-out in September, 1953, ten birds were present on Lake Barrine.

Order Charadriiformes: Family Charadriidae. Red-kneed Dotterel **Erythrogonys cinctus.** Small numbers have been recorded at Mt. St. John on several occasions during the summer months.

Family Scolopacidae. Little Whimbrel, **Mesoscolapax minutus.** This bird does not appear to be common but is seen at Townsville. I have noticed only one or two birds at a time.

Black-tailed Godwit, **Limosa limosa.** Though a rare bird, it has appeared near Townsville in flocks of 20 to 30. One such flock remained on the Common for a few months in the summer of 1947-48. In January, 1951, a similar group stayed for two days only, and in September, 1952, Mr. Roy Wheeler (R.A.O.U.) reported 33 birds at Mt. St. John. It was also reported at Cairns by R.A.O.U. members in September, 1953.

Order Passeriformes: Family Streperidae. Grey Butcher Bird, **Cracticus torquatus.** Although reference books quote Central Queensland as its northern margin, the Grey Butcher-bird was recorded in the Cardwell district in 1917 by A. J. Campbell and H. J. Barnard, who found it breeding in the adjacent tableland (Emu Vol. 17 Part 1). P. A. Bourke and the late A. F. Austin reported it as plentiful in 1944 on the Atherton Tablelands in open forest, though rarely seen round settlements (Emu Vol. 47 Part 2). Normally, it is not seen in Townsville, but it was in considerable numbers during the winter months of 1948 and of 1951. I heard several reports of its attacks on cage birds.

Plea For Retention Of Vernacular Name Echidna

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

The name **Echidna aculeata** was bestowed in 1792 by Shaw and Nodder upon a species of one of the only two genera of surviving monotremes, and this creature was known for very many years as such amongst zoologists and scientists generally, and the popular vernacular name **echidna** was accepted in most cases. A Tasmanian species, **Echidna setosa,** was described by Geoffrey in 1803. The word **Echidna** in Greek means viper, but it is difficult to understand why this animal should be associated with this serpent. Only in comparatively recent years was it recognised by zoologists that the generic name, **Echidna,** is quite untenable according to the rules laid down for biological nomenclature, because the same name had previously been given to a genus of eels, hence the name of the monotreme was changed to that given by Illiger in 1811, namely **Tachyglossus,** meaning quick tongue, referring to the rapid movements by which the tongue is operated, and rightly so, zoologists now refer to the above species as **Tachyglossus aculeatus** and **T. setosus** respectively.

Alternative vernaculars were and are "Porcupine" and "Spiny Ant-eater." The name porcupine is thoroughly objectionable, and it properly belongs to another group of placental mammals, in no way related to the **echidna,** and few people, other than those who are not particularly interested in any sort of classification, will defend the retention or propriety of such a vernacular.

However, Troughton, in his "Furred Animals of Australia," has labelled it "Australian Spiny Ant-eater," and adds that the name Echidna "belongs to a well-known genus of eels and that it must therefore no longer be used for the spiny animal." This is all very well, but so does the name of Ant-eater belong to a much better known Order of Mammals in other parts of the world, the **Edentata,** and includes the **Myrmecophaga.** The name Spiny Ant-eater implies that it is an Ant-eater as known abroad and the further affix of Australian implies that it is an Australian example of one of these mammals, but no zoologist will, under any circumstances, place the echidna in any group even remotely connected with the **Edentata.**

When one considers the uni-

versally accepted vernacular name of Platypus in use since 1799 for our own peculiar **Ornithorrhynchus,** named in 1800, nobody would dare to suggest that this vernacular name should be changed because the same name has been adopted as the biological name for a genus of weevils, a kind of beetle. If Troughton were consistent he would urge that the name platypus be scrapped for the very same reason that he advocates dropping the name of **echidna!**

If, therefore, the name Platypus is accepted generally for the "Duckbill," there is no reason why the original name of **Echidna** should not find a similar acceptance. It is therefore urged that this name be permanently retained as a vernacular, and the term Ant-eater—whether qualified or not—being that of the foreign Edentata, be completely abandoned.

WILLIAM HOSMER, F.Z.S.

It is with great pleasure that it is learnt that Mr. Hosmer, a member of the N.Q. Naturalists' Club, has been elected, at a recent meeting of the Zoological Society, London, a Fellow of the Society.

North Queensland Naturalists' Club

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

MEETINGS

12th January, 1954: Mr. W. Hosmer gave a talk on method of identifying venomous or non-venomous snakes by noting the number and arrangements of their respective labial plates, with chalk illustrations on blackboard. Attendance 20 members and several visitors. The Herpetological League was warmly commended for their fine exhibition of living reptiles, recently.

9th February, 1954: Decided to raise subscription of town members, adults £1 per annum, younger members, from 16 to 21 years, 12/6. Where two or more members of same family, second and other members to pay half subscription. Agreed to appoint Messrs. Blake and Hendry hon. members in recognition of transport facilities cheerfully supplied. Attendance 13 and several visitors.

9th March, 1954: Questions were answered: (a) How do orchids grow on dry bark? (b) Where do mites in cheese come from? (c) What is heavy water and how was it discovered? Attendance 16.

13th April, 1954: Collection of stone implements from Mr. T. J. Trembath, Bartle Frere. Collection of minerals from Mines Dept., Brisbane. Water snakes, alive, hatching from eggs (**Tropidonotus mairii**). Attendance 17 and several visitors.

NEW MEMBERS ELECTED

7th December, 1953: Mrs. W. G. Jensen, 78 McLeod St., Cairns; V. J. Lock (Junior), 162 Buchan St., Cairns.

12th January, 1954: A. J. Henschell, Freshwater; V. M. Reilly, 129 Grafton St., Cairns.

9th February, 1954: Miss A. E. Anthony, Police Station, Cairns; J. C. Gould, Cairns City Nursery, Edge Hill; Arthur Nilsson, Hambledon Mill Barracks, Hambledon; K. W. Hill, 19 Joan St., Bungalow; Barrie Chalker, Gillies Highway, Edmonton; W. D. Hipworth, 80 Buchanan St., Cairns.

9th March, 1954: Messrs Arthur Smith, E. M. Smith, both of 192 Pease St., Edge Hill; K. C. Whouley, Edmonton; J. E. Nevin, Criterion Hotel, Cairns.

14th April, 1954: Miss E. Chapman, 132 Buchan St., Cairns; J. E. Juniper (Junior), Earlville.

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