The NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALIST

CAIRNS

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MEETINGS: Second Tuesday of each month at Cairns Education Centre, Cnr. Morehead and Lazarus Sts., Bungalow, 8.00 p.m.

FIELDS DAYS: Sunday before meeting. Notice of place and time given in "Cairns Post".

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OBITUARY

Miss Katherine Joan Morris

With the death in Cairns on August 24, 1979, of Miss Katherine Joan Morris, the North Queensland Naturalists Club lost a capable editor of fourteen years standing. Miss Morris, better known as Joan, joined the club in April, 1962 and became its honorary editor in September, 1965.

Despite serious physical handicaps which kept her confined to a wheel chair, Joan led a full life and was an inspiration to all who knew her. Helped by her devoted companion, Miss Dawn Keith, she lived in her own home in Whitfield, Cairns, where she organised the complex daily roster for Meals-on-Wheels. She was active in this work until a few days before her death.

For years she transcribed articles and books into braille for the blind, later using a special braille typewriter presented to her by the Inner Wheel Club of Cairns. The many native trees and wildflowers in Joan's garden were evidence of her knowledge and love of nature. The Cairns Historical Society was another of her many interests.

Joan gave freely of her time, talents and means to help various charities, and as the Rev. Father Roberts said at her funeral at the Good Shepherd Church of England, "With all her limitations, she used every gift and ability she had, and said 'yes' to life".

A RECORD OF AN ALBINO RUFOUS RAT-KANGAROO (AEPYPRYMNUS RUFESCENS)

by P.M. Johnson* and T.R. Aaskov**

Little has been recorded on the occurance of albino macropodids in the field. The following record is of an adult male rufous rat-kangaroo (Aepyprymnus rufescens Gray) found as a "road kill" on "Lavinia Station" south of Sarina and forwarded in alcohol as a specimen to the N.P.W.S. Northern Regional Centre, Pallarenda, Townsville.

When found, the irises of the eyes were red in colour. The fur of the body, with the exception of the tail and hind-feet, was whitish-cream. The tail and hind-feet were a pale grey (probably due to staining by soil). Measurements were as follows:- Total length - 71.2 cm; tail - 36.4 cm; hind-feet - 13.2 cm; weight 2.1 kg.

The specimen has been retained in the reference collection at the Northern Regional Centre.

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GHOST BAT AND DEATH CRIES FROM THE RAINFORESTS OF MCILWRAITH RANGE, CAPE YORK PENINSULA

by S. VAN DYCK, Queensland Museum.

The Ghost Bat (Macroderma gigas) has previously been recorded from ten localities in Queensland (Dwyer 1968, Queensland Museum records and pers. comm. P.D. Dwyer, regarding skeletal remains found at Mt. Surprise). It has been found as far north as Helenvale, Cape York Peninsula, where Dwyer (1968) indentified a Ghost Bat carcass displayed in the Lion's Den Hotel and Boles (Marlow and Boles 1977) netted five adults at the Annan River in "Dry Gallery Rain Forest".

The capture of an individual at Attack Ck ($13^{o}30'S$, $143^{o}15'E$) approximately 45 km north of Coen extends the Ghost Bat's range in Queensland by 350 km northwest (Fig. 1).

The single male (Qd Mus. JM 2380) was collected at 11.30 p.m., 18 August 1978, in a sixty-foot mist net stretched across Attack Creek, an eastern tributary of the Archer River. The shallow creek is bordered on either side by a narrow belt of semi-deciduous mesophyll vine forest on riverine alluvia. Away from the creek the vegetation changes abruptly to Eucalyptus tetradonta - E. sp. aff. polycarpa woodland and E. cullenii - E. dichromophlora low woodland (Pedley and Isbell 1971).

Although an attempt was made to maintain the animal live in captivity, it became moribund, refused to eat and died after two days. Particulars are as follows: adult male; weight 105 g; length of forearm, 105 mm; head and body (vent) 122.5 mm; ear (n), 50.5 mm; testes development, large, scrotal; colour, back, grey, tipped by fawn; chest and belly, grey tipped by cream. Tooth wear indicates JM 2380 to be relatively old.

There are few published accounts of the behaviour or ecology of Ghost Bats. Dwyer (1968) notes some aspects of breeding behaviour in a small colony at Mt Etna in mid-eastern Queensland and Douglas (1967) provides detailed descriptions of reproductive, hunting and feeding behaviour of Ghost Bats in northern Western Australia. There are several accounts of Ghost Bats eating other species of small bats. Wood Jones (1923) examined the gut contents of mummified Ghost Bats and found masses of insectivorous bat hair. Douglas (1967) observed a Ghost Bat swoop on a wounded Sheath-tailed bat (Taphozous georgianus) and collected remains of the following food species in a roosting cave of Ghost Bats: Little Bats (Eptesicus pumilus), Common Sheath-tailed Bats (Taphozous georgianus) and Bent-winged Bats (Miniopterus schreibersii). Other small bats are known to form part of the prey of carnivorous bat species in tropical Africa and South America (Vaughan 1976, Greenhall 1968).

I regularly heard nocturnal distress screams from small bats while collecting in semi-deciduous mesophyll vine forests at Iron Range, Attack Creek and Buthen Buthen in Cape York Peninsula and I suspect these cries were a result of attacks by Ghost Bats. The cries resembled the sibilant shrieks made by Blossom Bats (Syconycteris australis and Macroglossus lagorchilus) when they are being disentangled from mist nets. They were heard frequently from above and from below the vine-forest canopy and were usually stifled after one or two seconds. Two large unidentified bats were seen in conjunction with screams at Buthen Buthen and one large unidentified bat flew over my head in response to imitated screams at Attack Creek.

At Iron Range, remains of azure kingfishers (Alcyone azurea) were found at dawn in tattered tangles of mist nets that were stretched across rivers. At Buthen Buthen the head of a rufous fantail (Rhipidura rufifrons) was found in a mist net stretched across a dry bed of the Nesbit River. These predatory raids could have been the work of Ghost Bats although it is noted that water rats and species of marsupial mice which occur in these areas could also have been the culprits.

Factors affecting the distribution of Ghost Bats have often been discussed. Wood Jones (1925, 444) supposed that increasing desiccation in northern South Australia "... made the obtaining of sufficient food impossible for a powerful and volant animal". Butler (1961) proposed

that, in Western Australia and South Australia, the Ghost Bat is a desert adapted animal which, with increasing humid conditions in the south west, was forced to shift to drier areas in the north (see also Ride and Serventy 1965). Hamilton-Smith (1966) suggests that in Western Australia its distribution may be limited by food supply and, as Douglas (1968) emphasizes, more importantly its accessibility to the bat. The presence of the Ghost Bat in Cape York Peninsula rain forests indicates that it is capable of existence under both extremely arid and extremely wet conditions.

The past and present status of Queensland and Western Australian Ghost Bats cannot be simply reconciled. It is possible that, by virtue of the harsh nature of some of its occupied habitats, it lives on a perilous balance between energy income and expenditure, the result of which in a few cases has meant the complete or partial disappearance of the bat from some areas.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to Mr. G. Czechura (Queensland Museum) for checking the mistnet and restraining the Ghost Bat as it was escaping. Dr. P.D. Dwyer (University of Queensland) read and criticised the work and Miss R. Owens typed the manuscript.

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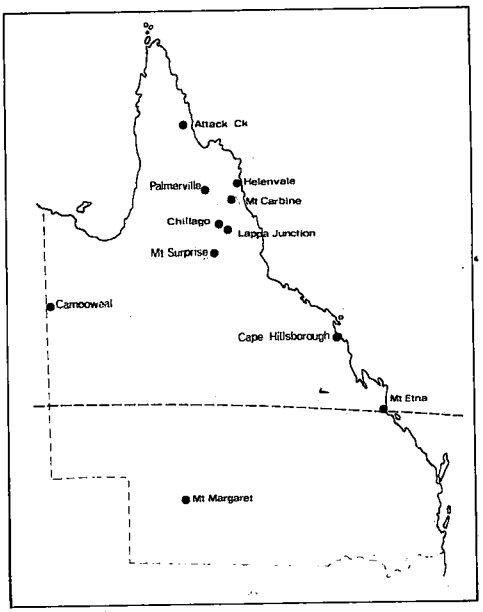

Fig.1. Distribution of the Ghost Bat (Macroderma gigas) in Queensland.

"SPOTLIGHT ON POSSUMS" BY RUPERT RUSSELL
Published by University of Queensland Press.

- N.C. Coleman.

This book reveals the patience and persistence of a dedicated naturalist in his studies of the life histories of North Queensland possums, a group of marsupials almost entirely nocturnal in habit, living in a variety of forest areas not conducive of easy observation. The descriptions of food preferences, the reflective colour of the eyes and the movements of the different species described by the author, plus the meticulous drawings by Kay Russell, make this a useful handbook for those who wish to learn more of the private lives of North Queensland possums.

trailing a second thread which she fastened to the first twig at about the same distance below. Straddling both these threads she moved back and forth several times between the two twigs, adding more silk to the two lines, and then formed a line between them in the same way.

From these first two twigs she constructed similar lines to several other twigs producing a tangled web of lines criss-crossing the first three. She then moved across and back in this tangle adding a maze of fine braces and struts connecting the main lines of the web and constricting it near its centre to something like an hour-glass shape. Moving to the top of the web the spider moved around its centre on the upper side in an uneven circular path. She did this more than a dozen times, laying a fresh thread on each trip and building up a thicker line than any yet made. The area of this was about that of a two cent coin and the encircling ring stood out clearly from the rest of the web.

The spider now started moving slowly back and forth over this area laying a fine band of gossamer-like silk over the support lines beneath and moving her abdomen from side to side. Later, she circled around near the enclosing ring, binding it to the fine sheet web within. On completion of this web she moved to the side of the web near the door and rested in a vertical, head down position, but in a few minutes she had moved back to the top of the web and raised her abdomen in the direction of the door (raising the abdomen in this way is usual among spiders when they emit silk for travel lines or webs). Watching closely, a fine thread could be seen drifting on the air within the cage and toward the cage door. A few minutes later the spider was on the netting of the door, about 10cm away from the nearest part of her web. Within the mosquito netting cage, which was inside my house, she had floated a fine strand strong enough to bear her weight (the spider is 9mm long).

In the next two hours she had constructed another web similar to the one on the twigs and was moving restlessly around the cage, probing into any corners of the timber and moving under the netting as though trying to get out.

At 4 p.m. I placed her in a large jam jar for safety and went out. Returning at about 11 p.m. I checked the spider and found that she had spun a slightly different web to those in the cage. It resembled a wheel with three very large spokes attached to the glass wall of the jar and with a hub having a circular, fine mesh web surrounded by a heavy thread. Each of the spoke-like arms was constricted in its mid section by a maze-like binding of fine silk and the web, which was made in the upper part of the jar about 1cm below the lid, was 4cm deep. The spider was resting upside-down in this web about 1cm down and to one side of the fine mesh web on top. Several photos were taken of her in this position with a ringlight and then a small live moth was dropped into the web. Its fluttering promptly attracted the spider which seized the moth and moved to the side of the jar below the web and, resting head down, started feeding.

This jar is 10cm deep, 6cm in diameter at the top and about 8cm at the bottom (all inner measurements). There are only a few small holes for aeration in the lid yet she managed to spin a circular web 4cm deep which was 6cm wide at the top and about 6.5cm across the bottom, and this was after she had already spun two sizeable webs less than twelve hours earlier. All of these were constructed in artificial conditions.

In their natural surroundings I have had up to seven females under observation, mostly on the outside of a web in a head down posture. At no time, either in captivity or in the natural state, in web or on rock face, have I seen this spider with legs outspread. It hunches the legs beside the body in an uneven manner and this, coupled with its colours, light and dark brown, grey and a little white on the palps, gives it the appearance of a bit of earthy debris.

I have never yet seen the male of this spider or the female constructing her web under natural conditions.

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SPATHOGLOTTIS PAULINAE - A QUEENSLAND TERRESTRIAL ORCHID.

by Keith Kennedy, Townsville.

One of the few Queensland ground orchids worthy of cultivation is the purple flowered Spathoglottis paulinae of the north-east. Although this particular species grows only in tropical Queensland, the genus occurs in S.E. Asia, both in and out of the tropics, and also in the Pacific area, for, according to Graf, there is a species S. pacifica growing in Samoa and Fiji, which has pale lavender-pink flowers, but he does not mention whether he saw it under cultivation or in its natural habitat. At the end of the last century another species with light purple flowers was found on the banks of Stony Creek, Cairns district, near the railway line, and was sent down to the Brisbane herbarium, where it was named S. soutteriana by Manson Bailey, after a William Soutter. It would be interesting to know if specimens are still growing there, and whether William Soutter was a visitor or a resident of Cairns.

The furthest south S. paulinae has been found is Cardwell, where it was collected by Dallachy and sent to Baron von Mueller at the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, who named it after a lady by the name of Miss Pauline Richmond.

The writer and a few other people in Townsville have flowered it in bush houses, but Cardwell seems to be its natural limit. The original of those I have growing was given to me by the late Stan Short who was an experienced orchidist, but unfortunately he did not tell me where he got his. They are erratic in flowering and under similar conditions some will flower and some will not.

Propagation is by division of the pseudo-bulbs, which should be planted half out of the soil, and at least two attached to each other. Several leaves arise in a bundle from the top of each pseudo-bulb, are about 40 cm in length and are plicate. The flowers are borne on a scape about 42 cm and are arranged 4 to 8 at its end to form an inflorescence of a close raceme. Length of flower is 4 to 6 cm.

According to an American grower, all species grow well in fibre and chopped sphagnum moss in which should be a small portion of loam, some crushed brick and sharp sand, no proportions given. I find for the Queensland species a suitable mixture is 4 parts garden soil (loam), 2 part coarse sand, 1 part humus, and 1 part crushed shell grit. The orchid seems to appreciate the shell grit.

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WILDLIFE AT THE SAUNDERS BEACH DUMP

by Rozanne Glazebrook

Saunders Beach is a small seaside locality thirty-two kilometres north of Townsville. The Saunders Beach dump is in the bush surrounded by eucalypt and paperbark woodland and coastal mangrove swamp. A small creek meets the sea in a narrow estuary 50 metres from the dump.

On 20th March 1978 I drove along the dirt road leading to the dump to observe a huge nest of sticks, high up a tree. The nest belonged to a white breasted sea eagle (Haliaeetus leucogaster). There was no sign of the bird, so I went back to a swamp on the other side of the road to do some bird watching. I saw lots of birds and also found a small nest containing four small speckled eggs.

On the way home I decided to make another quick trip to the dump. As I drove up the road I surprised a lace monitor (Varanus varius). He was on the ground at the dump, but quickly ran up a nearby gum tree when he heard me. He sat about two metres up the tree, but when I got out of the car he climbed higher and swivelled around behind the tree, with just his long claws in view. There were a lot of bird sounds, and as I looked through the binoculars I saw a forest kingfisher (Halcyon macleayii) in the next tree; it was loudly shrieking at the goanna. After a few minutes, the kingfisher flew onto the same tree and perched on a branch above the goanna. The bird continued to glare down at the goanna. The goanna ignored the kingfisher, but continued to look at me.

I walked down the road about 40 metres and continued to watch the scene through the binoculars. They both stayed in the same position all the time I was there.

A flock of noisy friarbirds (Philemon corniculatus) called to each other in a tree nearby; I looked at them through the binoculars, and suddenly I spotted a pair of large claws on another gum tree. Sure enough, as I watched, a large sand goanna (Varanus gouldii) came into view as he edged his way around the tree. He was much larger than the lace monitor and had a circular pattern on his yellowish coloured body. The lace monitor had broad bands of black and yellow along the body, tail and limbs. Nothing more happened, so I went home for about three quarters of an hour.

On return to the dump, I heard a lot of noise coming from the back edge of the tip, tins clanging, and paper rustling. I walked over, and was just in time to see a large goanna ambling slowly away towards the swamp. It appeared to be the same sand goanna I had previously seen up the tree. Unfortunately I couldn't follow him as I was bare footed, and there were lots of tins, broken glass etc. and also the dump was smouldering. I watched the goanna through the binoculars as he disappeared from view.

The lace monitor had gone from his tree. Rainbow birds (Merops ornatus) flew overhead, and one flew past with a white butterfly in his mouth. One solemn dollar bird (Eurystomus orientalis) sat very quietly on a branch and stared at me.

On 6th April I returned to the dump. There were no goannas in sight, but when I looked at the sea eagles' nest I was thrilled to see a magnificent white breasted sea eagle sitting majestically on a branch above the nest.

There was a fire on the dump and the bird was looking towards an area where cans and bottles were exploding. I walked slowly towards the nest, but as I neared it the eagle flew away and circled overhead. I decided to leave when an extra loud explosion sent glass flying in all directions.

I called into the dump again on the 22nd and 23rd of April, but there was no sign of the eagle or the goannas. I was very lucky to see them when I did. I never realized a dump could be so interesting.

OUR FISH PETS

by Barbara Collins.

I was getting impatient because Harry wasn't coming to relieve me of my baby sitting chore so I could do some shelling when the tide turned. Harry and Les had been in the same spot for what seemed like eternity. Hauling Leanne (two years) up on my back, tossing aside the Linckia laevigata (Blue starfish) and beche de mer she had acquired, we set out to see what for ... Les was the proud possessor of a small Amphriprion ocellaris and they had been working to free its host, a lovely green anemone. Shelling was forgotten; in any case the boat was going. Our little fish did well, and took pride of place in the aquarium amongst his marine counterparts, mainly my shells ... until we shifted the aquarium in September and lost the anemone. It was so sad, our little fish looked so lost and vunerable and contented himself in the water outflow. He was apparently not suffering, he still ate well. Two weeks went by and finally a low tide, so it was off to muddy Cooya Beach and hopefully to find an anemone. Luck was on my side, and I dug up a large brown one with purple tips from the dead coral rubble surrounding it. Fortunately it was not connected to anything solid or deep and it was installed without problem in the aquarium. We picked the same spot that the other had liked and without doubt it had to be the most suitable spot. Our new aquisition did not go walkabout, but the fish was not interested either. We watched helplessly. One morning when I went down to feed the fish, there was the A. ocellaris nestling snuggly in the anemone; it had taken him ten days. The fish was loving it as his own and had already started housework. Any debris, sand or food particles he shovelled into his mouth, swam away and dropped it over the edge of the anemone.

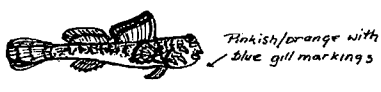
At feeding time, the fish would swim out, capture a piece of prawn or fish and swim back to the anemone with it, drop it onto the anemone, tug and pull at the tentacles and worry the anemone until it began to withdraw with a good hold on the food. We regularly watched this procedure at feeding time. We had kept the fish nine months and he had almost doubled in size when we lost him when the baler died in December. A few days later a friend gave us a pair of adult Amphripion akindynos from his aquarium and within half an hour they had staked territorial rights on the anemone. They are not so endearing or particular about their housekeeping and give the anemone only cursory attention, but it is theirs and they defend it agressively.

A pair of sedentary tiny red fish with blue gill markings we call "gobies" (Gobidon histrio) have been with us for ages, probably two years or more now. They are only 25 mm long and we have to remember to catch them if we move or clean the tanks. They always had separate areas of the tank and were seldom seen close to each other. In the newly set up environment after the last shift, one took up residence in a hollow beneath a piece of red coral, the other in the remnants of a beat up old turbo shell that had once housed a hermit crab. One evening I went down to turn out the lights and the tank was a seething mass (so it seemed) of tiny transparent fish about 2 mm long with prominent eye spots. I had noticed a fattening of the goby in the coral, but had just assumed a case of over indulgence in food ... obviously not! "She" was resting nearby on a coral branch, whilst "he" was doing all the nursery work ... no wonder he was thin. "His" shell was apparently the brooding area, and there he was, swimming in, reappearing and swimming off a short distance and spitting a mouthful of babies into the surrounding water ... there were hundreds! In the morning, before even breakfast, the tank was first on the agenda ... not a sign ... not a single solitary one ... the only other fish was the A. ocellaris. The male had vacated his shell and was on a coral branch where he could dart for cover if threatened, the female was in an old clam adjacent to her coral home. Since the baler died, we haven't seen him about, perhaps he too was lost, or maybe parenthood posed too taxing a role!

References: A Field Guide to the Reef Fishes of Tropical Australia and the Indo Pacific Region by R.H. Carcasson.

Amphriprion ocellaris
(Cuvier & Valenciennes)
1830

Amphriprion akindynos
(Allen 1972)



Gobiodon histrio
(Cuvier & Valenciennes)
1837

THE ORIGIN OF GENERIC NAMES OF QUEENSLAND RAINFOREST TREES - PART XI

by JAMES A. BAINES

Note: STCN = Standard Trade Common Name
PCN = Preferred Common Name

Endospermum. Gk endon, within; sperma, seed; named by Bentham because of the placement of the seeds. E. myrmecophilum, STCN Endospermum, or Toywood, has a specific epithet that means ant-lover (cf. Myrmecodia, Ant-house Plant).

Erythrina. Gk erythros, ed; alluding to the colour of the flowers. E. vespertilio, STCN urey Corkwood, or Coral Tree, has leaves shaped like the wings of a bat, hence its specific epithet (Lat for bat, a night-flier--vesper = evening). E. phlebocarpa is listed by Hyland. Fam. Papilionaceae.

Erythroxylum. Gk erythros, red; xylon, wood; from the red colour of the wood of some species. Bailey includes this genus in the spelling Erythroxylon, which was Linnaeus' version of P. Browne's Erythroxylum of 1756. The Qld species, E. ecarinatum, Brown Plum, is one of 250 species in this large genus. Fam. Erythroxylaceae.

Eucalyptus. Gk eu, well; kalyptos, covered; alluding to the cap or lid (operculum) that covers the stamens in the bud. Though the total number of Australian species given by Burbidge, c.600, is now reduced considerably, few species are at home in the rain forests--Hyland lists only 7, of which E. torelliana, named by Mueller after L. de Torelli, is known by the aboriginal name Cadaga. Cadaga seems to be really at home in rain forests of Nth Qld; of course eucalypts are dominant in temperate forests. Fam. Myrtaceae.

Eugenia. Named by L. after Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663-1736), the distinguished soldier who was Marlborough's ally. Born Francois Eugene de Savoie-Carignan, he renounced France when Louis XIV banished his mother, and his military fame was earned as an Austrian general. His name Eugene means well-born in Greek. This enormous genus of 1000 species has had botanists in doubt, but at the present time Australian species tend to be regarded as being in Syzygium and Acmena, although some botanists have retained the name Eugenia; e.g. J.H. Willis for the Lilly-pilly, and Chippendale (in Francis' 3rd edition) for Kuranda Satinash, E. kuranda (also known as Cherry Penda). Fam. Myrtaceae.

Euodia. Smith & Stearn agree with Bailey in deriving this from Gk euodia, 'a sweet scent', but Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon gives euodia as meaning 'good journey, fair voyage', whereas it gives euodros as meaning 'sweet-smelling'. Despite the fragrance of the leaves, the absence of the letter r in the generic name leads one to surmise that the Forsters gave the name from the 'good appearance' (eu, well or good; odes, from eidos, form). The name was for many years written as Evodia (as given by Bailey in 'Flora of Queensland'). Francis includes 4 species, including E. elleryana, named by Mueller after Robert L.J. Ellery (1827-1908), Victoria's first Government Astronomer, 1853-95, who was president of the Royal Society of Victoria from 1856 to 1884, and E. bonwickii, named by Mueller after James Bonwick (1817-1906), early historian, author of a great variety of educational books--over 60 titles--who made his mark in Vic., Tas., N.S.W. and England. Fam. Rutaceae.

Euplassa. Gk eu, well; plasso, to form or mould. This genus is now restricted to tropical America, but Gevuina bleasdalei, Blush Silky Oak, was at one time placed in it by German botanist Diels. Fam. Proteaceae.