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FIND AT MOUNT CAMERON WEST W. Bryden

ON 12 January of this year a report was sent to the Tasmanian Museum stating that a skeleton, probably of a Tasmanian aborigine had been uncovered at Mount Cameron West. The following day the Director and the Invertebrate Zoologist went to the site and the bones were collected and brought to Hobart. In situ they were very soft and easily broken. The remains were by no means complete but most of the cranium was present together with mandibles and some portions of the long bones. The remains were located in an area which must once have been a large midden — over quite an area there were shells of various kinds and marsupial bones and many artifacts.

The remains will be dried out and then examined by specialists and some bones will be carbon dated.

The bones had been uncovered by the strong east winds blowing the sand back to sea.

As far as is known there is only one complete skeleton of a Tasmanian aborigine — that of Truganini — which is deposited in the Tasmanian Museum for use by accredited scientists. Others are made up of the bones of several Tasmanian aborigines.

The Museum is grateful to Mr. Ross Jones, to Miss Janet Parker for their help and for their kindness in reporting their find. The Tasmanian Police were most co-operative and our thanks are extended to them also.

A LICHEN HUNT G. C. Bratt

AFTER several years of collecting lichens for overseas specialists I attempted to identify my own material. The first literature I located on Tasmanian lichens was a paper by Wilson (1892) which mentioned amongst others a distinctive and handsome species Lobaria scrobiculata said to have been collected by Robert Brown at Risdon Cove in 1803.

This species may be described briefly as follows — Lobes 1-2" wide, pendant from rock. Upper surface bluish-green with pale blue eruptions. Under surface with brown-white down except for naked white areas which give this surface a distinct spotted appearance.

Because of its distinctiveness I was annoyed that I had so far overlooked this species and decided to make a particular search for it. This was in 1963 and although it is now difficult to remember the chronology of events some of the more interesting stages of this hunt are described below.

Wilson's paper cited authorities other than Brown for the occurrence of L. scrobiculata in Tasmania but detailed examination of the literature indicated that some of these authorities referred back to Brown's collection or that later papers had corrected errors of determination. A collection by a Miss Lilley could not be located and a paper by Hampe (1852) cited a collection by Stuart merely labelled V. D. L.

A number of searches in the country around Risdon failed to reveal any Lobaria sp. At this stage it appeared possible that mis-labelling of material collected outside Tasmania was the possible origin of the Tasmanian records. In 1963 Wetmore published a catalogue of the lichens of Tasmania based upon a literature survey. This catalogue listed nine species of Lobaria. On first reading I thought that this implied that I could not distinguish Lobaria from Eucalyptus. However further reading of the

of the cited literature suggested that this list could be reduced to two species L. scrobiculata and L. sublaevis. The confusion in the literature is illustrated by the fact that three of the quoted Lobaria species were synonymous with a Thelidea sp. which belongs to a separate family.

The most extensive collections of Tasmanian lichens other than Wilson are probably those of Shirley (1892) and Weymouth (1890-1920). Shirley referred only to Brown's collection and Weymouth's collection, which is in part housed in the Tasmanian University Herbarium, does not contain any Lobaria sp. Further searching at Risdon and elsewhere failed to reveal a Lobaria so that by 1968, with a collection of 6000 specimens from about 700 separate areas, I was convinced that species of Lobaria either never existed or had been wiped out in Tasmania.

Early in 1969 I visited the British Museum in London and inspected Brown's collection. His sample from Risdon Cove was definitely L. scrobiculata but the printed label indicated that his collection had been donated to the Museum in 1877 and thus the possibility of mis-labelling arose. At an earlier stage I had been able to show that a collection of Ephebe tasmanica by Brown had been made in N. S. W., not Tasmania as indicated by Brown's labels. Having inspected samples of L. scrobiculata I realised that this species was not as distinctive as I had previously thought and could be confused with others, especially if in a juvenile condition. Re-examination of hundreds of possibilities in my collection failed to show any Lobaria sp. I prepared to publish a note stating that Lobaria species did not exist in Tasmania.

A 'miracle' now occurred (October 1969). For some time I had been re-examining of Stictaceae (the family to which Lobaria belongs) in the light of information gathered overseas. Firstly, I found a rather poor specimen from Liffey Falls which could possibly be mistaken for a Lobaria and could be similar to the material cited in the literature as L. sublaevis. This specimen had been put aside in 1964 as being too difficult for my then limited knowledge. Two nights later I opened a packet of material collected in January 1969 and with mixed feelings of horror (because of my oversight) and jubilation realised that here was a single small lobe of Lobaria scrobiculata from Ben Lomond.

The following weekend my friend, who had collected the sample from Liffey Falls, and I made a renewed hunt for Lobaria species. By 10 a. m. on the Saturday we had found good samples of the Liffey Falls material, but decided that it really was a Pseudocyphellaria sp. (at least in the family Stictaceae). We left soon after for Ben Lomond. Although I could locate, within a quarter of a mile, the area of the previous collection several hours passed without a single specimen of Lobaria being found.

About 5 p. m. we decided to have a last search before making camp. The second rock outcrop inspected yielded a small specimen of L. scrobiculata. A descent of a hundred feet revealed a large granite outcrop half covered with large fronds of this species. Other outcrops showed none.

Thus, after about seven years searching we had found a single occurrence of Lobaria while Brown had managed to find a specimen within days. L. scrobiculata occurs in most countries in the world and hence natural restriction to one area in Tasmania is hard to understand. Perhaps it is the disastrous effect of man on the Tasmanian landscape that has almost wiped out this handsome lichen.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON THE NESTING AND FEEDING OF THE EASTERN SPINEBILL

Ellen McCulloch

I AM collecting data on the Eastern Spinebill Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris, and would like information in general, and in particular on breeding, status and feeding.

Considering how widespread and well-known this species is, comparatively few breeding records are available. They do not appear to nest often in suburban areas, although they frequently visit flowering plants in gardens in, for example, Melbourne's eastern suburbs in autumn and winter. I daily watched 2 young in a nest at Vermont (13 miles east of Melbourne) from 22/12/'69 until they left, 31/12/'69. The garden was secluded, well planted and with surrounding cover, and the nest was in a Liquid-amber. The few records of nests that I have tend to show an adaptation to exotics, but many more records are needed before any reliable conclusions can be drawn.

In my garden, at least, Spinebills seem to be opportunist feeders, taking nectar

(and insects) where and when available. Without seeming to show preference they visit native *Correas* and Heath, Red-hot Pokers, *Prunus*, Flowering Currant *Ribes* sp. *Grevilleas*, false Tree Lucerne, *Fuchsias*, *Camellias* and anything else with nectar. Many of these flowers are also visited by shorter-billed birds such as White-plumed Honeyeaters *Meliphaga penicillata* and Silvereyes *Zosterops lateralis*, which may pierce the base of *Correas* and *Lachenalias*, or sometimes tear the flowers right open to reach the nectar. Does the shape of the flower have any bearing on whether preference is shown by Spinebills?

It is interesting to note that Dr. R. W. Shufeldt, the American army surgeon who published well over a thousand osteological papers, considered that on skull and tongue structure the Spinebill should be placed amongst the Nectarinidae, not in the Meliphagidae (1913, *Emu* 13 : 8-9). This viewpoint is upheld by J. Dorst, 1952-3 *Oiseau* 22 : 185-214. The idea does not appear to have received consideration or support from Australian workers.

I would be most grateful for information on this species. Ellen M. McCulloch (Mrs.) 6 Bullen Avenue Mitcham Vic. 3132.

WILDLIFE OF WEST HOBART

David Ziegeler

HABITAT. The vegetation on Knocklofty is open forest with an underscrub of native grasses. The surrounding area is covered with heath with small patches of open forest, grassland, black-berries, and gorse. There is a small damp and shady gully just above the Hobart Rivulet which was filled with dense scrub before the 1967 fires which burned most of the area. Recovery has been quite fast. Throughout this sandstone area there are natural and man-made ponds, the latter usually at the bottom of sandstone quarries.

FISH.

Eel. One (species unknown) observed in the Hobart Rivulet.

AMPHIBIANS.

Brown Treefrog *Hyla ewingii*. The most common and widespread frog, found wherever there is water.

Spotted Marshfrog *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*. Found around the larger weedier ponds.

Burrowing Marshfrog *L. dorsalis*. Found around the larger ponds.

Brown Froglet *Crinia signifera*. Common around every pond.

Tasmanian Toadlet *Pseudophryne semimorata*. Found in small numbers under stones in dried up ponds in autumn. This toadlet lays its eggs in damp cavities under stones in dry ponds in autumn and the tadpoles hatch when the pond fills with water.

REPTILES.

Three-lined Skink *Leiopisma trilineatum*. Common on Knocklofty, found in small numbers in stony areas on the sandstone hills.

Spotted Skink *L. ocellatum*. Found on Knocklofty and on the sandstone hills.

Very wary.

Metallic Skink *L. metallicum*. Common in gardens, rarely common where the Three-lined Skink occurs.

Blue-tongue Lizard *Tiliqua scincoides*. Widespread in small numbers.

She-oak Skink *T. casuarina*. Appears to be scarce. I have only seen a few.

Mountain Dragon *Amphibolurus diemensis*. Widespread and fairly common especially in sandstone country.

Tiger Snake and Copperhead *Notechis scutatus* and *Denisonia superba*.

Snakes are commonly seen especially around the ponds. Probably both species are common.

White-lipped Whipsnake *D. coronoides*. Although I have only recorded it once it may be common.

MAMMALS.

Brush-tail Possum *Trichosurus fuliginosus*. Occurs in small numbers on Knocklofty.

Ringtail Possum Pseudocheirus convolutor. One found dead on Knocklofty.

Marsupial Mouse (~~species unknown~~). One seen crossing a track.

Grey Bandicoot Isoodon obesulus. Common before the fires, it still occurs in small numbers.

Barred Bandicoot Perameles gunni. I have only seen one but it is probably common in gorse and heathy areas.

Potoroo Potorous tridactylus. Recorded once in a small gully. Probably wiped out by the fires.

House Mouse, Brown Rat, Rabbit. Fairly common.

Hare. Occurs in small numbers on Knocklofty.

BOOK REVIEW

"Orchids of Australia" by W.H. Nicholls (Price \$30.00)

UNDOUBTEDLY, the study of orchids is at present riding high on a crest of popularity throughout Australia. Ten years ago, almost nothing existed in the way of literature to enlighten the collector on his orchid finds, but such has been the enthusiasm and interest of orchidologists during the last decade that there are now several periodicals allocating considerable space to native orchids, one publication devoted to native orchids alone, and new books have been published on the subject in at least four States, as well as rare and expensive out-of-print books being reprinted at nominal prices.

Added to this present wealth of literature, we now have the Complete Edition of "ORCHIDS OF AUSTRALIA", by the late William Henry Nicholls - a truly magnificent record of one man's study of these beauties of Nature - with 476 plates in full colour, 129 pages of descriptive text, together with a Key to the genera, an excellent index, and a most helpful glossary giving simple meanings of technical terms.

The illustrations in this book, very fine reproductions of Nicholls' water-colour paintings, show the plants in natural size, together with detailed enlargements of the flower parts, so invaluable in the accurate identification of many orchid species. Nicholls' paintings are remarkable for their exactness and detail, based on approximately 30 years collecting experience and observation. His work is particularly notable for its inclusion of the unusual forms of a species which can be so misleading when trying to identify a plant.

Not all Australian species are included in this book, but more than half (almost 400) are illustrated and described. Tasmanian orchid enthusiasts will find "Orchids of Australia" of immense value in checking plants - with only several minor exceptions, all orchids recorded for this State (approximately 132 species plus 5 or 6 varieties) are included. With such an outstanding reference work at our disposal, it could well happen that further species will be recognised and recorded as part of the Tasmanian flora.

Some of the more studious orchid collectors may regret that keys to the species are not included, especially to those of the larger genera - Prasopphyllum, Thelymitra, Pterostylis, and Diuris, for instance. The Editors, Messrs. D.L. Jones and T.B. Muir explain in their introduction the reasons for this omission - "the delimitation and correct names of a number of species being insufficiently known at present." However, most readers will not miss these keys, as once the genus is recognised, it is simple enough to turn to the appropriate section of the book and check the plant concerned against the illustrations (in most instances, this can be done more quickly than following a key) and then read the descriptive text in the front of the book.

Those who have copies of the earlier incomplete edition of "Orchids of Australia", published by Georgian House, will miss the details of date and place of collection of species in each State - information which has not been fully included in this edition. Nevertheless, some will consider this omission a favourable one, in that if such areas are not advertised then there is less chance of over-collection causing the eventual elimination of the rarer species.

All who admire and collect our native orchids, as well as those who cherish beautiful books, owe a great deal to Messrs. Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited for their part in making available Nicholls' complete work. It is to be hoped that their interest will be rewarded by not only our gratitude but by a complete sell-out of this edition.