

Notes on Mammals Collected on the 1885 Geographical Society of Australasia's Expedition to New Guinea

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ABSTRACT. In 1885 the Geographical Society of Australasia sent the steam launch *Bonito* to chart the Fly and Strickland Rivers (now in Western Province, Papua New Guinea). The Expedition spent five months in New Guinea with the primary objectives of survey and biological exploration. The type locality of the murid rodent *Melomys muscalis froggatti* Troughton, 1937, described from a single specimen obtained during the Expedition, is localized to the region of the base camp at Observation Bend, Strickland River, based on the original Expedition maps and the unpublished diary reminiscence of the collector W. W. Froggatt. A review of the mammal collection obtained during that Expedition has not been reported previously, perhaps due to the poor surviving documentation. Several months after the Expedition returned to Sydney, Australian Museum curator E. P. Ramsay prepared a list of 22 mammal specimens received by the Museum. Twenty specimens attributed to the Expedition were not entered into the collection registers until 1913, half of which are likely to be incorrectly associated with the Expedition. Most specimens were registered with very limited data about collection date and locality. Of the 22 specimens originally received by Ramsay, eight rodents and two flying foxes (*Pteropus* spp.) have not been located in the Collection, but might remain unrecognized as specimens with no data. It is possible that additional mammal specimens were sent by the Geographical Society of Australasia to other institutions at the conclusion of the Expedition.

Introduction

The Geographical Society of Australasia Expedition to New Guinea (hereafter, the Expedition), explored the lower and middle reaches of the Strickland River, in what is now Western Province, Papua New Guinea, during 18th July to 18th November, 1885 and returned to Sydney on 3rd December, 1885 (Everill, 1888). The Expedition was planned by the Sydney branch of the Geographical Society with financial contributions from the Brisbane and Melbourne Branches. Zoological collecting was a primary

objective (Pulsford, 1885) and significant input from E. P. Ramsay, curator of the Australian Museum (AM) Sydney, resulted in that museum getting first choice of material collected on the Expedition (Pulsford, 1885; Ramsay, 1888). Numerous papers based on material collected on the Expedition were published by AM taxonomists in the decades after the Expedition, dealing with reptiles, fish and invertebrate groups. The Expedition's sponsors were probably embarrassed by the controversy surrounding the Expedition as it was widely viewed as being unsuccessful (Dwyer *et al.*, 2015). The Expedition has remained relatively

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