

# New Information about the Holotype, in the Macleay Museum, of the Allied Rock-wallaby *Petrogale assimilis* Ramsay, 1877 (Marsupialia, Macropodidae)

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The location of the missing holotype of the Allied Rock-wallaby *Petrogale assimilis* is given as the Macleay Museum. Background information about its collection during the *Chevert* Expedition of 1875, obtained from Sir William Macleay's personal journal, sheds further light on the history of this important specimen.

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## DISCUSSION

Type specimens serve as the physical reference point for a particular taxon. Most holotypes are single specimens upon which the description and name of a species is based (ICZN 1999). The holotype for the Allied Rock-wallaby *Petrogale assimilis* was established by Edward Pierson Ramsay in March 1877. In reference to this specimen he wrote, "I believe, the only specimen obtained; sex, female" (Ramsay 1877a. p. 360). Ramsay was referring to the *Chevert* Expedition headed by Sir William Macleay. Macleay's personal journal shows that the specimen was collected on June 2, 1875 at Palm Island (18°43'55.9"S 146°36'22.5"E), Queensland. Palm Island falls within the provenance of the Nyawaygi people (Horton 1996). A little later, in July 1877, Ramsay published another note on this species. This time Ramsay stated two specimens were collected "an adult and a young" and gave only a very brief description of the fur on the younger specimen (Ramsay 1877b. p. 11). The months and year of Ramsay's publications were determined from Joseph James Fletcher's publication of the dates for early issues of the *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales* (Fletcher 1896).

The two specimens referred to by Ramsay (1877a, 1877b) were collected during the *Chevert* Expedition in 1875 (Fulton 2012). Macleay's collectors George Masters, Edward Spalding and Dr W. H. James collected the specimens, inland on the island, with the aid of an unnamed Nyawaygi guide (Macleay 1875). The specimens were incorporated into the collections of the Macleay Museum, which were subsequently donated, along with its building, to The University of Sydney. The University placed the collection into storage soon after Macleay's death to make use of the building for other purposes (Fulton 2012). Approximately 80 years later many of the Museum's type specimens were sent to other institutions. The mammals were thought to have been moved to the Australian Museum along with the birds (Stanbury 1969a, 1969b). Fulton (2001, 2012) found some birds were missing and they might still be in the Macleay Museum.

The Australian Faunal Directory, an incomplete online catalogue of taxonomic and biological information on all Australian animal species, registered the following status for the type data on *Petrogale assimilis*: "Holotype whereabouts unknown, Palm Is., N of Townsville, QLD" (ABRS 2009). Upon a search at the Macleay Museum the two

## HOLOTYPE OF *PETROGALE ASSIMILIS*

specimens were found, M422 (female holotype) and M423 (male). They are currently labelled NHM.422 and NHM.423.

Given this discovery, it is possible that other type specimens whose whereabouts is currently unknown may reside in the collections of the Macleay Museum.

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