

Notes on the Mammals Collected on the *Chevert* Expedition, to New Guinea, in 1875

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The mammals collected on the *Chevert* Expedition in 1875 are discussed on the basis of information in William Macleay's journal, Lawrence Hargrave's diary and old newspaper articles. William Petterd's published reports give the collection location of the type specimen of *Isoodon macrourus moresbyensis*. Other collections are discussed, including kangaroos *Dorcopsis luctuosa* and *Macropus agilis* specimens of which reside in the Macleay Museum but cannot be confirmed as collected by the *Chevert* Expedition. Rodents, including Bramble Cay Melomys, *Melomys rubicola*, have been added to the list of mammals originally reported by Edward Pierson Ramsay.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Chevert* Expedition, financed and led by William Macleay, collected natural history specimens and ethnographical artefacts from the islands off north Queensland, the Torres Strait Islands and New Guinea (Figure 1). The expedition was undertaken in 1875 yet many of the different collections have not been fully identified: for example, Thomas Reedy's plant collections have only recently been discussed (Fulton 2016a). The expedition was considered successful and collected approximately 1,000 birds, 800 fish, and many reptiles, mammals, insects, spiders, marine molluscs and ethnographic objects for the Macleay Museum's collections (Macleay 1875; Fletcher 1893; Fulton 2012).

In New Guinea, the *Chevert* Expedition collected at Katow, Yule Island and Hall Sound. No collections were made at Port Moresby. Specimens from Port Moresby were collected by those who returned to New Guinea after the conclusion of the *Chevert* expedition: Lawrence Hargrave, Dr William James, Felix Knight, William Petterd and Kendall Broadbent. Most collections from this location were by Petterd

and Broadbent. They collected at Port Moresby from October 29, 1875, until January 26, 1876. James and Knight collected at Port Moresby until November 4, 1875 (Hargrave's diary) and afterwards at Yule Island and Hall Sound until August 23, 1876 (Fulton 2017a).

Ramsay published the mammals of the *Chevert* Expedition in 1877 (Ramsay 1877a). However, through correspondence with the Macleay Museum and careful reading of a series of unpublished documents and newspaper articles, I have extended the list of mammals collected from Ramsay's initial publication and identified inconsistencies in other publications. My sources include William Macleay's journal; Lawrence Hargrave's diary; newspaper articles written by the ship's captain, Charles Edwards, and by the zoological collector William Petterd.

RESULTS

Fifteen mammalian taxa collected on the *Chevert* expedition have been identified (Table 1).

MAMMALS COLLECTED ON THE *CHEVERT* EXPEDITION

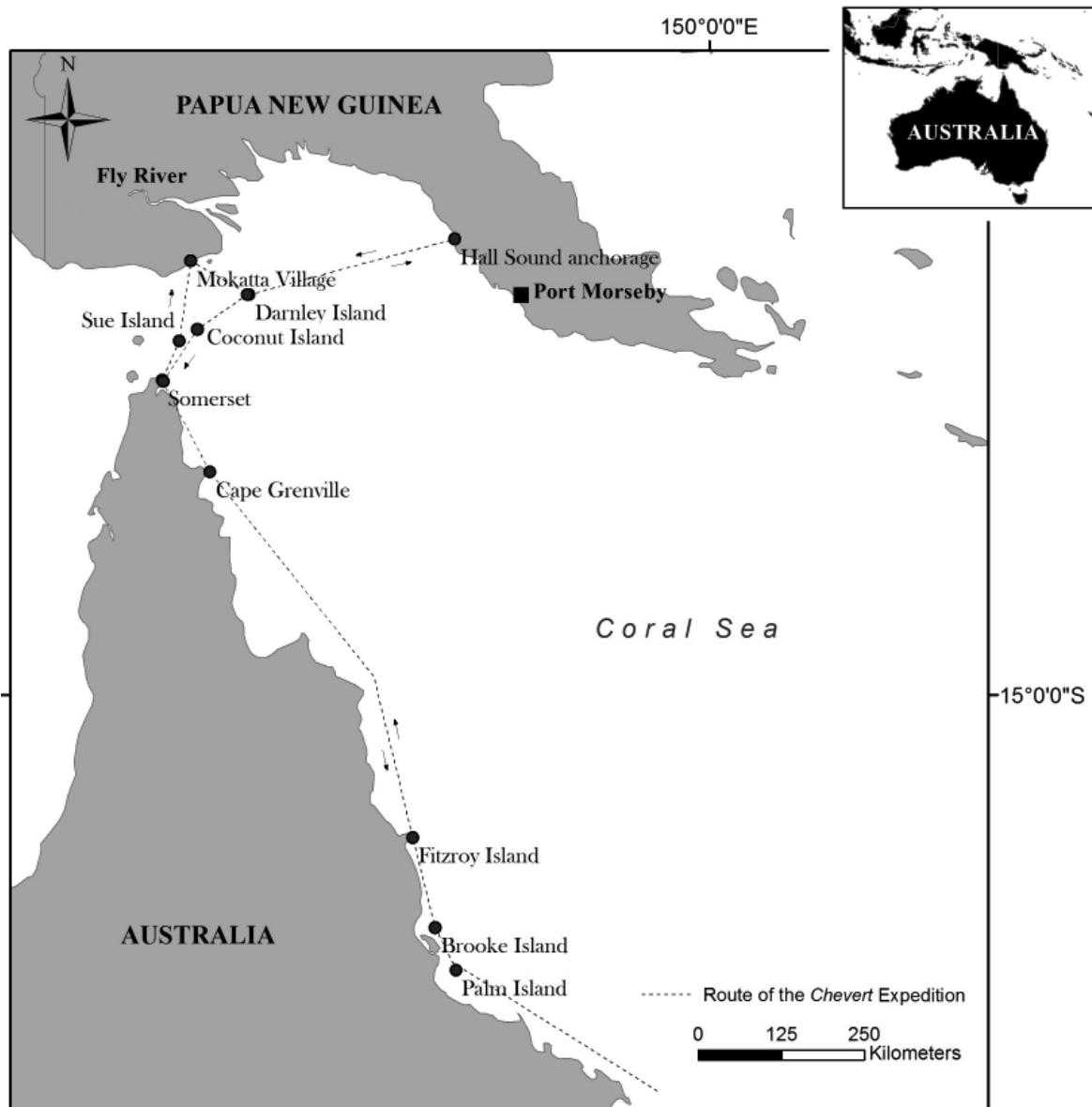


Figure 1. The 1875 voyage of the *Chevert* showing collecting points and the general direction of travel.

DISCUSSION

Type specimens

Stanbury (1969) stated that six mammalian types were collected on the *Chevert* Expedition, citing Macmillan, (1957), a semi-fictional work. Macmillan made only passing reference to three mammalian collections that included: “a large flying-fox” collected at Yule Island (p. 124), an unknown rat at Bramble Cay (p. 120) and an “opossum” from the Ethel River (p. 126). None were suggested to be type specimens, nor did Macmillan discuss the natural history collections

with any authority. None of Macmillan’s mammals were regarded as types by Stanbury (1969) and four of the six types specified by Stanbury were collected by Andrew Goldie after the *Chevert* and published later by Nicholai de Miklouho-Maclay (Miklouho-Maclay 1884; 1885). Only two of Stanbury’s types, were collected on the *Chevert* expedition: the Allied Rock-wallaby *Petrogale assimilis* (see Ramsay, 1877b and also Fulton 2016b) and the Large-Eared Flying-Fox (subspecies) *Pteropus macrotis epularius* Ramsay, 1877a.

Ramsay (1877a) described a new species of Bandicoot from the *Chevert*: the Port Moresby

Table 1. Mammalian taxa collected during the *Chevert Expedition of 1875*. Current taxonomy follows Jackson and Groves (2015) for Australian taxa and Wilson and Reeder (2005) for Papua New Guinea taxa. The question mark (?) is to underscore uncertainty.

Taxa	Initially published as	Locality
PERAMELIDAE		
Northern Brown Bandicoot <i>Isoodon macrourus torosus</i>	Tawny-throated Bandicoot <i>Perameles macroura</i> (var.) <i>torosus</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 12	near Cooktown
Northern Brown Bandicoot <i>Isoodon macrourus moresbyensis</i>	Port Moresby Bandicoot <i>P. moresbyensis</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 14	no location by Ramsay: Petterd states Hall Sound
ACROBATIDAE		
Feather-tailed Possum <i>Distoechurus pennatus</i>	<i>Phalangista pinnata</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 12	Ethel River
PETAURIDAE		
Sugar Glider <i>Petaurus breviceps papuanus</i>	Flying Phalanger <i>Belideus ariel</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 12	Katow (Now Mawatta near the mouth of the Binaturi River)
PHALANGERIDAE		
Australian Common Spotted Cuscus <i>Spiloglossus nudicaudatus</i>	<i>Cuscus maculatus</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 11	Cape York
Common Spotted Cuscus <i>Spiloglossus maculatus</i>	<i>C. brevicaudatus</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 12	no location by Ramsay: original label: Hall Sound, New Guinea
MACROPODIDAE		
Gray Dorcopsis <i>Dorcopsis luctuosa</i>	<i>Dorcopsis luetuosus</i> [sic] Petterd 1876	Hall Sound?
Agile Wallaby <i>Notamacropus agilis papuanus</i>		Hall Sound?
Allied Rock-wallaby <i>Petrogale assimilis</i>	<i>Macropus assimilis</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 11	Palm Island
PTEROPODIDAE		
Northern Blossom-bat <i>Macroglossus minimus</i>	Kiodote <i>M. minimus</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 10	Katow (Now Mawatta near the mouth of the Binaturi River)
Black Flying-fox <i>Pteropus alecto</i>	Red-naped Kalong <i>P. funereus</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 8	Cape York & Bet Island
Spectacled Flying-fox <i>Pteropus conspicillatus</i>	<i>P. conspicillatus</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 7	Rockingham Bay & Yule Island
Large-Eared Flying-fox <i>Pteropus macrotis epularius</i>	<i>P. epularius</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 10	Katow (Now Mawatta near the mouth of the Binaturi River)
EMBALLONURIDAE		
Coastal Sheath-tailed Bat <i>Taphozous australis</i>	North Australian Cave Bat <i>T. australis</i> Ramsay 1877a, p 10	Cape York
MURIDAE		
Bramble Cay Melomys <i>Melomys rubicola</i>	large rats Edwards 1875; Fulton 2016	Bramble Cay
large rodents (specimens not found)	<i>Hapalotis</i> sp. Macleay's journal 27 June 1875, collected by Spalding and Petterd	Shallow Bay, Cape York
<i>Mus</i> sp.	Unpublished; collected 21 July 1875, museum label	Long Island (Now Sassie Island)

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Bandicoot *Perameles moresbyensis* now known as *Isoodon macrourus moresbyensis* and a new variant *P. macroura* (var.) *torosus* now known as *I. macrourus torosus*. Parnaby et al. (2017) suggested the latter *I. macrourus torosus* may not have been collected on the *Chevert* expedition. Based on a close reading of William Macleay's personal journals, I found that the *Chevert* did not collect at Cooktown and I conclude that this specimen was most likely collected by Edward Spalding, for Macleay, on an earlier trip.

Missing and confused locations

Ramsay (1877a) did not specify locations for two species: the Common Spotted Cuscus *Spilocuscus maculatus*, (Ramsay's *Cuscus brevicaudatus*) and the Port Moresby Bandicoot *Isoodon macrourus moresbyensis*, though the former is resolved by its original label as Hall Sound, New Guinea. The latter, the Port Moresby Bandicoot, was collected at Port Moresby, its common name providing a good clue. It was collected at Port Moresby by Petterd and Broadbent who always collected together around Port Moresby (Hargrave's diary). Petterd reported it in the first of four newspaper publications in 1876. He wrote, "A *Perameles* is found at Port Moresby allied to an Australian species" (Petterd 1876a). Petterd was less clear about the cuscus, "*Cuscus maculatus* [Common Spotted Cuscus *Spilocuscus maculatus*] (along with *Belideus ariel* [Sugar Glider *Petaurus breviceps*]) are common to both places" (Petterd 1876a). ["Both places" refers to Australia and New Guinea in his article.] Ramsay also reported, "Several specimens from Cape York" (Ramsay 1877a). At least one of these is known to have been collected by Dr James during the expedition (Fulton 2017a).

Petterd's *Belideus ariel* [Sugar Glider] was reported from Katow by Ramsay. He later noted, "I believe this is the only species of this genus yet found in New Guinea" (Ramsay 1877a), indicating that only one species was procured on the expedition. He also wrote, "This species was obtained at Katow, and is also found at Port Moresby." By the time Ramsay published on the zoology of the *Chevert* (1877a), he would have known of the mammals collected at Port Moresby by Petterd and Broadbent. Petterd erroneously reported the Sugar Glider from the Ethel River, Hall Sound, "We also got the nest with mother and young of that pretty little flying squirrel *Belideus ariel*" (Petterd 1876b). This was the Feather-tailed Possum *Distoechurus pennatus* published by Ramsay as "*Phalangista pinnata*... Adults and young of this pretty species were obtained on the Ethel River, New Guinea" (Ramsay 1877a). Ramsay may have known of its occurrence from Port Moresby through

specimens collected after the *Chevert* expedition. While at Port Moresby, Hargrave reported getting "3... flying squirrels, very pretty and vicious" (Hargrave's diary).

Macropodidae

Petterd wrote more on the mammalian collections in a second article entitled Hall Sound (Petterd 1876b), distinct from two following articles entitled Port Moresby (Petterd 1876c; 1876d). Petterd wrote, "The zoology of this part of New Guinea was particularly interesting to us, for here we met with many forms we had not seen before, and quite different to anything found in Australia. The animals are not numerous—that is, specifically, but abundant individually. Two species of wallaby, one the *Dorcopsis luetuosus* (*sic*) discovered by Signor D'Albertis, and the *Cuscus maculatus*, have been got here. *Belideus ariel*, a *Perameles*, and several kinds of the smaller mammals were also obtained" (Petterd 1876b).

It is difficult to match these general comments with collections. The two species of kangaroo are likely to have been collected during the expedition, particularly given that they were abundant. Yet this cannot be confirmed at present. Both species reside in the Macleay Museum: Gray Dorcopsis *Dorcopsis luctuosa* and Agile Wallaby *Macropus agilis* and are currently thought to have been collected at Port Moresby. Petterd also published the following about the collections at Port Moresby indicating that the mammals were present at both locations. With reference to Port Moresby:

"The principal mammal hunted and used as food is the kangaroo, which is very plentiful on the other side of the coast range" (Petterd 1876c).

With reference to the *Chevert* at Hall Sound:

"The mammals are the same as those of Hall Sound" (Petterd 1876d).

I can see no reason why Macleay's collectors would have ignored collecting these two kangaroos at Hall Sound. Adding to the uncertainty, Macleay (1875) made the general statement: "We were not fortunate in procuring many of the mammals; but, kangaroos of various sizes and genera appeared to be abundant and we saw specimens of *Cuscus*, *Belideus*, and other *Phalangers*." The *Chevert* did collect the latter three mentioned taxa. While the first half of the sentence suggests no kangaroos were collected the second half reports only seeing taxa that were clearly collected. In the absence of known specimens I conclude that macropods were not collected.

Muridae

Ramsay (1877a) did not publish on the Muridae collected by the *Chevert*. Perhaps the rodents collected were not presented to Ramsay. Three collections have since come to light. The first is in the Macleay Museum with two specimens of *Mus* sp., spirit and skeletal, presumed from a single animal, collected at Long Island [now Sassie Island]. The second is the Bramble Cay Melomys *Melomys rubicola*. It was originally and simply reported as a large rat by Captain Edwards (Edwards 1875) and has now been identified and discussed (Fulton 2016c; 2017b). Thirdly, two rodents (presumably the same taxon) were collected by Spalding and Petterd, at Somerset (Cape York) on June 24, 1875. Macleay described them as, “two specimens of a species of *Hapalotis*” (Macleay 1875: personal journal dated June 25). *Hapalotis* was used as a catch-all for large Australian rodents in Macleay’s time and does not point to a specific taxon. These might be *Uromys caudimaculatus* or *Mesembriomys gouldii* (pers. comm. Kristofer Helgen). The presence of the rodents collected by the *Chevert* was confirmed, though without detail, by Macleay in his very brief summary of the mammals seen on the voyage, “a few *muridae*” (Macleay 1875).

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