

FIVE NEW RATS OF THE GENERA *HYDROMYS* AND *MELOMYS* FROM NORTHERN AUSTRALIA.

By

ELLIS LE G. TROUGHTON.

Zoologist, Australian Museum.

(Figures 1-2.)

As a result of encouraging volunteer collectors by the provision of instructions and gear, and the personal efforts of Museum workers on the rare opportunities afforded for field work, the acquisition of indigenous mammals has shown a marked increase over the past fifteen years. New forms of marsupials, rodents, and bats are occasionally identified, and opportunities must be sought for the preparation of papers dealing with as many species as possible in order to close up the gaps and aid in working out the zoo-geographical relationships of the unique mammalian fauna.

Of the five new forms described here, one species of *Hydromys* was collected by the author on Lawn Hill Creek, about 100 miles south of Burketown, which is in the Gulf country of north-western Queensland, while an interesting new *Melomys* was secured by a colleague, Mr. F. A. McNeill, when on vacation at Hayman Island in the Whitsunday Group on the north-eastern coast of that State.

The submission of various kinds of mammals for identification regarding economic and health matters is another source of interesting material. In connection with the investigation of Weil's Disease in the cane fields of north Queensland, over a hundred specimens of rats have been submitted for examination by Sir Raphael Cilento, Director-General of Public Health in that State, and Professor Harvey Sutton of Sydney University, amongst which were five specimens of the previously little known *Melomys littoralis*, providing the extension of range noted below from the Cairns district 260 miles southward to Ayr.

The value of voluntary field activities, however, is strikingly shown by several small collections received from Groote Eylandt off the western and rather hostile shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The first mammals were collected by Sir Hubert (then Captain) Wilkins for the British Museum (Natural History), which financed the expedition, resulting in the description of new species not represented in an Australian Museum. A few years later, by the kindly interest and efforts of the late Rev. H. E. Warren between 1928-1930, supplemented by those of his successor at the Groote Eylandt Mission Station, Mr. H. L. Perriman, a representative series of mammals was received in the Museum containers, including not only described species, but also a strikingly new species of *Hydromys*, and a new *Melomys* as well. A new *Hydromys* from Moa or Banks Island, Torres Strait, is here added to the long series of important donations received as a result of the very active interest in the indigenous mammalian fauna shown by Mr. A. S. Le Souef, C.M.Z.S., Curator of Taronga Zoological Park.

In expressing appreciation of the efforts of past and present voluntary collectors, one may appropriately pay tribute of sincere regret at the tragic passing of the Reverend H. E. Warren, in the Bass Strait air disaster of 1934, from the band of willing helpers in fields beyond one's reach.

The text figures were kindly prepared by my colleague, Miss Joyce K. Allan, Assistant Conchologist to the Australian Museum.