

THE IDENTITY OF COOK'S KANGAROO.

By

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In a joint paper concerning "Captain Cook's Kangaroo", in the "Australian Zoologist" for 1925, original accounts were quoted to emphasize the fact that, contrary to popular belief, and subsequent writings which maintained the fallacy, Cook's party did not observe the actual animal at Botany Bay. It was also demonstrated conclusively that the Great Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus major* Shaw, 1800), hitherto generally listed as *Macropus giganteus*, is not identical with the small species of kangaroo first observed by Cook and his party at Cooktown.

The ineligible generic names of *Jaculus* and *Jerboa* were applied to Cook's animal in 1777 in reference to the outward resemblance to the small rodent jerboas of other lands, together with the specific names of *giganteus* and *gigantea*, respectively by Erxleben and Zimmermann, because of its gigantic size in comparison with them. It was indicated, however, by the present authors in the Check-list of Mammals¹, that the name *giganteus* for Cook's species was also antedated by that of *cangaru*, applied by Müller in 1776 in the *Systema Naturæ* of Linné, based upon the original written versions of the name used by the aborigines.

In our first paper it was found impossible to indicate the definite identity of Cook's kangaroo because of the lack of topotypical representatives of the several species of macropods known to occur in the Cooktown area, and the seeming inconsistencies in the hunters' and naturalists' descriptions. Analysis of a copy of Solander's MS. Latin description which Iredale had procured, however, eliminated the medium-sized "Agile Wallaby" by its partially hairy rhinarium, sandy to yellowish coloration, and somewhat stocky build, and suggested that the animal might have been a small wallaroo.

The size given for the animal actually described, however, did not accord with that of a fully grown wallaroo, and a decision regarding its identity was deferred until skins and skulls of the various local species could be obtained for comparison. Fortunately, Iredale joined the British Museum Barrier Reef Expedition at Low Isles in 1929, and it was arranged that he should visit Cooktown and secure specimens if possible. As a result of his inquiries, skins and skulls of a wallaroo and whiptail wallaby were subsequently purchased, showing the wallaroo to be a richly coloured animal of the *antilopinus* type, and therefore in no way comparable with the "mouse" and "ash" coloured animal of the Cook accounts.

In a renewed effort to settle the identity of Cook's species, Troughton recently reviewed the characteristics of the whiptail in regard to the specimen from Cooktown and found them in general agreement with the original accounts, excepting that the incisors were not in accordance with our first interpretation

¹ Iredale and Troughton.—Check-list of the Mammals Recorded from Australia, Mem. Austr. Mus., vi, 1934, p. 55.