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The Type Locality of the Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush *Cinclosoma castaneothorax* Gould, 1849

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The locality at which the Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush *Cinclosoma castaneothorax* was first collected has always been vague and has varied from the Darling Downs to the Dawson River and has even been considered to be unknown (Gould 1849; Condon 1962; Ford 1983). This communication is an attempt to define the locality more precisely.

The problem

The Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush *Cinclosoma castaneothorax* was described by John Gould, from a single

male, at the meeting of the Zoological Society of London of 28 November 1848 (Gould 1849), giving the type locality as, 'Darling Downs, New South Wales'. In 1855 he modified this account to read: 'For a knowledge of this richly coloured and very distinct species of Ground-Thrush science is indebted to Charles Coxen, Esq. [Gould's brother-in-law], of Brisbane, who discovered it in the scrubby belts of trees growing on the table-land to the northward of the Darling Downs in New South Wales'.

In the century following Gould's description there

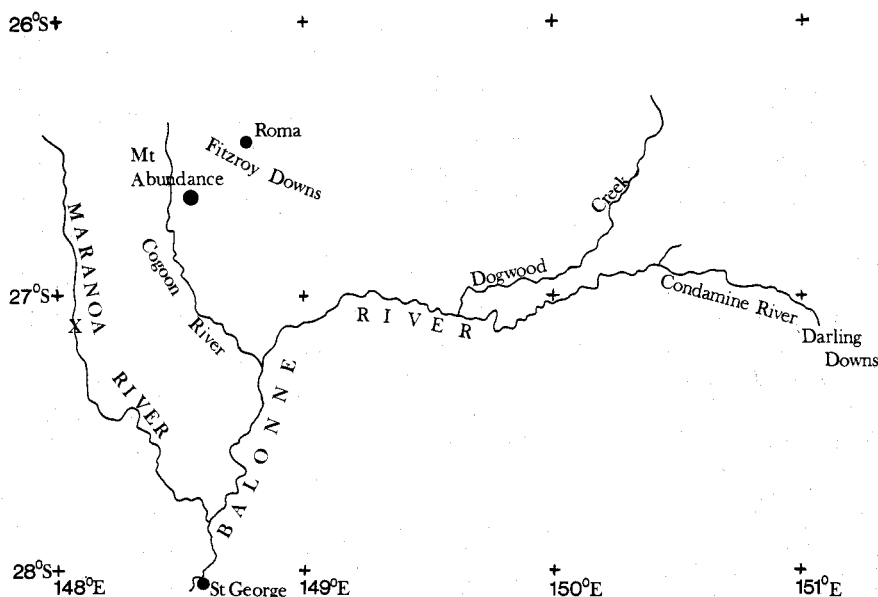


Figure 1 Localities mentioned in text. X = site of Kennedy's camp 25 May 1847.

were very few records of the Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush. As a consequence Gould's recorded locality was believed to be correct. Chisholm (1945) extracting ornithological records from the diary of John Gould's collector, John Gilbert, suggested that a pair of unknown quail-thrush seen by him may have been this species. On 1 December 1844 Gilbert was in the Valley of the Ruined Castles in the upper Dawson catchment, where he noted, 'while I was out I was rather surprised to see a pair of *Cinclosoma*, perhaps a new one, but I thought I recognised in it a new species, it eluded my search in a deep ravine, where I could not follow it' (Gilbert's diary in Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales; note that Chisholm's quote was incorrect). Chisholm noted that the type specimen of the Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush had been collected by Coxen, 'who shot it in the area to the north of the Darling Downs — not far from the spot indicated by Gilbert.'

This comment prompted Condon (1962) to restrict the type locality to, 'Near the Dawson River, Queensland.' Ford (1974) accepted this conclusion but later changed his opinion (Ford 1983), suggesting that both localities were incorrect, based evidently on his own exhaustive study of the quail-thrushes. Although not stated, Ford found that the eastern-most limit of the Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush was much further west than Gilbert's unidentified birds, which were probably Spotted Quail-thrushes *Cinclosoma punctata*.

A possible solution: Coxen's expedition to the Maranoa in 1847

Standard references on the Coxen family do not reveal where or when Charles Coxen obtained the specimen. However, from mid-1846 to late 1847 at least six expeditions approached the eastern limits of the Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush in the Maranoa Region. The area concerned was in the vicinity of the present town of Roma, west to near the Maranoa River and south to its junction with the Balonne River (Fig. 1).

In the *Moreton Bay Courier* on 16 October 1847 there is an account of Coxen's expedition to the 'Fitz Roy Downs' in August and September 1847 (Anon. 1847). He started down the Condamine River on 18 August in company with Philip Pinnock and 'a native black'. Unfortunately, his route westwards is hard to trace. He passed Dogwood Creek 'and afterwards crossed three smaller tributaries of the Condamine before they came in sight of Fitz Roy Downs'. Coxen is said to have climbed Mount Abundance, which is east of the Cogoon River at 26°41'S, 148°26'E, 'from which a tolerably open country was seen extending to the eastward, but which on examination was found rather unpromising, the scrubs being larger, more dense, and covering a greater extent of country than any they had passed over on their route. In fact the country has been improperly designated *downs*, for it is only open here

and there, with low sandy ridges and brigalow [*Acacia harpophylla*] scrubs, varying from one to three miles in length. They discovered the best country in the vicinity of Grafton Range, which is described as tolerably good, although nearly all the ridges were covered in scrub.' The party returned by travelling down the Cogoon River and then back up the Balonne River, which Coxen called the Condamine.

This appears to be the expedition on which the Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush was collected, for the newspaper notes, 'Mr. Coxen procured three new ornithological specimens during his trip.' What the other two specimens were is not known. Between the years 1840, when Gould was in Australia, and 1867, when Gould received a painting and specimens of the Coxen's Fig-Parrot *Opopsitta coxeni*, Gould made no mention of Coxen supplying him with any material other than the single male Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush.

Although the Quail-thrush is not known east of 148°E (Blakers *et al.* 1984), the habitat near the Maranoa and Cogoon rivers may be suitable for the species. The bird's preferred habitat is Mulga *Acacia aneura* on stony hills. Nix & Austin (1973) noted that Mulga was at its eastern limit on the hills near the lower Cogoon River. Indeed, Ludwig Leichhardt visited the area a few weeks earlier and wrote that when he was about 35 km east of the Cogoon River near 27°S, 'we came to sandstone ridges which were covered with scrub composed of cypress pine [= *Callitris*], dodonaea, and bricklow [= Brigalow], and which extended fully ten miles to the westward. Here another species of acacia akin to the bricklow formed a scrub worse than any we had yet met; dead timber made the road extremely circuitous, and the progress slow' (Leichhardt 1847a).

Discussion

By itself Coxen's account suggests that the specimen was collected somewhere along the lower Cogoon River. However, the account of Coxen's expedition was reprinted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 23 October 1847 and Leichhardt felt obliged to respond to it (Leichhardt 1847b).

Leichhardt met Pinnock on the Darling Downs after both had returned from their respective expeditions. Pinnock told Leichhardt that Coxen's party had come across the tracks of Leichhardt's party but had tended to travel to the south of Leichhardt's tracks whenever they met them. Leichhardt (1847b) reasoned that Coxen was too far south to have visited Mount Abundance.

The account of Coxen's expedition also noted that, 'A few miles to the eastward of Mount Abundance the party came upon Mr. Kennedy's tracks, and discovered places where his party had been excavating the ground in search of water'. In May and June 1847 Edmund Kennedy travelled north along the Maranoa River where his party was forced to dig for water on 25 May when they were near 27°10'S, 148°03'E (Beale 1983). These waterholes were also seen by Leichhardt when he came to the Maranoa some months later (Leichhardt 1847a). As Kennedy's waterholes were dug some 65 km south-west of Mount Abundance, this suggests that either the newspaper account of Coxen's expedition was incorrect or that Coxen misjudged where he was or that another expedition dug for water to the east of Mount Abundance.

About a month after Leichhardt and Coxen visited the Maranoa Region the first cattle were brought into the area by Allan Macpherson. He found horse tracks at the junction of the Cogoon and Balonne Rivers which he believed may have belonged to either Leichhardt or Coxen's parties (Cheyne-Macpherson 1934). One of the stockmen in Macpherson's party, a James Rogers, wrote a letter in the *Moreton Bay Courier* in December 1847. He noted that, 'The only tracks I saw on the Cogoon and the Fitz Roy Downs appear, on comparing notes with Mr. Coxen, to be those of his party and Messrs. Archer and Blyth [sic = Blythe, a member of Archer's second party].'

Thomas Archer led two forays to the Fitzroy Downs in early July and again in early August, before Leichhardt and Coxen visited the area (Archer 1897; Webster 1980; Roderick 1988; Leichhardt's diary in the Mitchell Library).

Thus, there are two conflicting versions as to the route of Coxen's expedition. It is possible that Coxen was mistaken and he was at the Maranoa when he believed he was at the Cogoon. If this was the case the tracks seen by Rogers on the Fitzroy Downs may all have been made by Archer's expeditions. As noted by Leichhardt, the country between the Cogoon and the Maranoa is a series of sandstone hills covered in cypress pine, Mulga and Brigalow. This certainly would not have been inviting to the squatters of the Darling Downs accustomed to open grassland (see French 1989). The other possibility is that Coxen was indeed on the Fitzroy Downs.

As the exact route of Coxen's expedition will probably never be resolved and both localities apparently hold suitable habitat, I recommend that the type locality

of the Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush be modified to the general area of the lower Maranoa River valley, Queensland.

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Plastics in Nests of Australasian Gannets *Morus serrator* in Victoria, Australia

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Numerous studies have indicated the prevalence of plastic detritus in the marine environment (e.g. Colton et al. 1974; Bourne 1976; Pruter 1987), including subantarctic waters (Gregory 1990). Although the source of some of this material may be from the land, a considerable amount is deposited as ships' waste or as the dis-

carding or break-up of fishing gear (Pruter 1987; Vauk & Schrey 1987; Gregory 1990; Montevicchi 1991). Quite apart from loss of human-perceived amenities around beaches, some forms of plastic debris may affect marine vertebrates either by entanglement or ingestion (Laist 1987; Pemberton et al. 1992). Some seabird