

ANIMALS THE ANCESTORS HUNTED

An account of the wild mammals
of the Kalam area, Papua New Guinea

Foreword by TIM FLANNERY



Ian Saem Majnep
Ralph Bulmer

Illustrations by Christopher Healey

Aps basd skop kmn ak pak ñbelgpal

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Ian Saem Majnep
Ralph Bulmer

Illustrations by Christopher Healey

Edited by Robin Hide and Andrew Pawley



Crawford House Publishing Australia
Adelaide



Ralph Bulmer and Ian Saem Majnep in New Zealand, November 1977



Ian Saem Majnep and Andrew Pawley, Canberra, December 1996

*Ami-yad Kalam gos key nyl
yp dad apl mab-juj,
katp wot moluk okok knl,
tap-kub gnek,
yad gos nop nylg mdebin.*

For my mother Kalam, who with such fortitude
carried me when we slept under the trees and in the rock-shelters
and under the leaking roofs of desolate houses,
so that I survived and grew.
I have not forgotten her.

—Ian Saem Majnep

A CHP production

Produced and published by Crawford House Publishing Australia Pty Ltd
14 Dryandra Drive [P.O. Box 50]
Belair SA 5052 Australia

A CIP entry from the National Library of Australia

Animals the ancestors hunted : an account of the wild mammals of the
Kalam area, Papua New Guinea

1st ed.

Bibliography.

Includes index.

ISBN 1 86333 298 7.

I Mammals – Papua New Guinea – Kalam Region. I. Hide, Robin
Lamond. II. Pawley, Andrew. III. Majnep, Ian Saem, 1948?–. iv. Healey,
C.J. (Christopher James).

599.099569

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CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i> – Tim Flannery	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Editors' Preface</i>	xix
<i>A pronunciation guide to Kalam</i>	xxxviii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xli
<i>Facsimiles:</i>	
1 First page of Ian Saem Majnep's transcript of Kalam text, part of Chapter 11	xliv
2 First page of Ian Saem Majnep's transcript of Pidgin text, part of Chapter 11	xlv
<i>Maps</i>	
1 Papua New Guinea: Kalam area	xiv
2 Study area and location of Kalam speakers	xlvi
3 Kaironk Valley, Madang Province	xlvi
Chapter 1 I now begin the introduction to this book	1
Part I	
The Small Forest and Scrub Wallabies	22
Introduction	
Chapter 2 Now I'm going to tell the story of <i>sgaw</i> , the Small Forest Wallaby	25
Part II	
The true arboreal kapuls: the Copper Ringtail and the Giant Rodents	42
Introduction	
Chapter 3 Secondly, I shall discuss <i>ymduj</i> , the Copper Ringtail	51
Chapter 4 <i>Mosak</i> , the Bamboo Kapul, and <i>gudl-ws</i> , the Husk-shredder	67

Chapter 5	<i>Mumuk</i> , the Cane Kapul, <i>abben</i> , the Highland Giant Tree-rat, and <i>kabkal</i> , the Lowland Giant Tree-rat	85	Chapter 13	<i>Kmn godmg</i> , the Water-side Rat, and <i>kmm kuyep</i> , the Water-rats	199
Part III	The tricky arboreal kapuls: the arboreal montane cuscus, smaller Ringtail, Striped Possum and Sugar Glider		Part VII	The most important <i>as</i> mammals: the colonial-nesting small rodents, and some other small creatures of the forest	
Chapter 6	Introduction	97	Chapter 14	<i>As yngem</i> , the Greater Prehensile-tailed Rat, the Tree-fern Rat and (?) the Little Ringtail; <i>as gikep</i> , the Lesser Prehensile-tailed Rat, and <i>as sjay</i> , the Long-snouted Rat	203
Chapter 7	Now we describe <i>kmm atwak</i> (the Beech Cuscus) and related cuscuses (<i>kmm maygot</i> and <i>kmm sbi</i>)	109	Chapter 15	<i>As aln</i> , the Marsupial Rats and <i>as tumuk-as</i> , the Jumping Tree-mouse	211
Chapter 8	<i>Wcm</i> , the Stationary Ringtail	123	Part VIII	Common small ground mammals of the higher forest	
Chapter 9	<i>Skoyd</i> , the Painted Ringtail	129	Chapter 16	Introduction <i>As mug</i> , the Bush Rat, and <i>as kaugn</i> , the Small Mountain Rat	231 233
Part IV	I'll talk first about <i>bic</i> , the Striped Possum, then about <i>aymos</i> , the Sugar Glider	139	Part IX	Two common small mammals of the grasslands: <i>sumsum</i> and <i>alks</i>	
Chapter 10	<i>Madaw</i> : the Ground Cuscus	149 153	Chapter 17	Introduction <i>Sumsum</i> , the Pygmy Possum, which builds its nest on swordgrass clumps; and <i>alks</i> , Short-snouted White-bellied Rats, which feed on wild pepper fruit	238 241
Part V	Women's prime game, the bandicoots		Part X	<i>Kopyak</i> : the Dirty Rat	245
Chapter 11	Introduction Now I shall talk about <i>kmm wgi</i> (the Long-tailed Bandicoot), and <i>kmm pakam</i> (the Hunting Bandicoot)	173 177	Chapter 18	Introduction <i>Kopyak</i> , the Dirty Rat	249
Part VI	The Spotted Quoll; and the Water-rats and Water-side Rat		Part XI	Mammals of the warm lowlands	
Chapter 12	Introduction	190		Introduction	252
	<i>Kmn suatg</i> , the Spotted Quoll	195			

Chapter 19	<i>Numul kmn</i> : Kapuls of the warm lowlands	257
Part XII	Dogs, wild dogs and spirit dogs	
	Introduction	268
Chapter 20	Now I'm going to talk about the dog, <i>kayn</i>	273
Chapter 21	Wild dogs look like ordinary domestic dogs	289
Part XIII	Some forest plants that people eat when hunting	
	Introduction	312
Chapter 22	When people went hunting kapuls, they also gathered edible wild plants in the forest	317
Appendix I	Mammals Recorded in the Kaironk Valley Region	337
Appendix II	Glossary and Index of Kalam Names for Mammals	342
Appendix III	Plants of Significance in Kalam Animal Lore	349
Bibliography		392
Indexes	A. Index of Animal and Plant Names	411
	1. Mammals	415
	2. Birds	417
	3. Reptiles, Frogs and Fishes	418
	4. Invertebrates	419
	5. Plants	
	B. Index of Places and Persons	428
	1. Places	433
	2. Persons	
	C. General Index	438

DRAWINGS

by Christopher Healey

PLATE 1	<i>Sgaw</i> (<i>Dorcopsulus vanheurnii</i>), Small Forest Wallaby	24
PLATE 2	<i>Ymduy</i> (<i>Pseudochirops cupreus</i>), Copper Ringtail	50
PLATE 3	<i>Mosak</i> (<i>Mallomys rothschildi</i>), Bamboo Kapul	66
PLATE 4	<i>Maygot</i> (<i>Phalanger carmelitae</i>), Mountain Cuscus	108
PLATE 5	<i>Wcm</i> (<i>Pseudochirops corimae</i>), Stationary Ringtail	122
PLATE 6	<i>Stoyd</i> (<i>Pseudochirulus forbesi</i>), Painted Ringtail	128
PLATE 7	<i>Blc</i> (<i>Dactylopsila palpator</i>), Striped Possum	138
PLATE 8	<i>Madaw</i> (<i>Phalanger gymnotis</i>), Ground Cuscus	152
PLATE 9	<i>Wgi</i> (<i>Microperoryctes longicauda</i>), Long-tailed Bandicoot	176
PLATE 10	<i>Suatg</i> (<i>Dasyurus albopunctatus</i>), Spotted Quoll	194
PLATE 11	<i>Godng</i> (<i>Parahydromys asper</i>), Water-side Rat	198
PLATE 12	<i>Yngenn</i> (<i>Pogonomys loriae</i>), Greater Prehensile-tailed Rat	210
PLATE 13	<i>Aln</i> (<i>Phascosorex dorsalis</i>), Marsupial Rat	226
PLATE 14	<i>Mug</i> (<i>Mammelomys lanosus</i>), Bush Rat	232
PLATE 15	<i>Sunsum</i> (<i>Cercartetus caudatus</i>), Pygmy Possum	240
PLATE 16	<i>Kopyak</i> (<i>Rattus exulans</i>), Dirty Rat	248
PLATE 17	<i>Takp</i> (<i>Spilococcus maculatus</i>), Spotted Cuscus	256
PLATE 18	<i>Kayn</i> (<i>Canis familiaris</i>), Domestic Dog	272

PHOTOGRAPHS

Ralph Bulmer and Ian Saem Majnep, New Zealand,	frontispiece
26 November 1977	
Ian Saem Majnep and Andrew Pawley, Canberra,	frontispiece
December 1996	
Ian Saem Majnep and family, December 1981	xlix

PART V

Women's prime game, the bandicoots

Introduction¹

Compiled by Robin Hide and Andrew Pawley

Wgi, the Long-tailed Bandicoot, *Microperoryctes longicauda*,² appears to be fairly common at all altitudes, in forest and in bush-fallow, in the Upper Kaironk. *Pakam*, probably *Peroryctes raffrayanus*,³ is quite similar to *wgi* in shape, but is considerably larger and lacks the dorsal stripe characteristic of the latter. It is rare in the local mountain forest but is more often found in more open country at lower altitudes. Two other terms for *wgi* were recorded earlier: *wenem* and *amlgn* (Bulmer and Menzies 1973:87). *Bezd* is described as a local variety of *pakam*.

Kalam living at lower altitudes apply the term *cemen* to a *wgi*-like creature and Saem believes that this is a local variety of *wgi*, with a slightly shorter tail. This seems unlikely, as elsewhere in New Guinea the lower altitudinal limit for the Long-tailed Bandicoot is around 1 000-1 200 m (Flannery 1995:114; Menzies 1991:54). During a short visit to Kaironk in November 1999, Saem described *cemen* to Robin Hide as larger than a *wgi*, and more like a *pakam* but with a shorter tail. He described it as previously restricted to the lowlands below Womuk, but noted that since about 1985 it had begun to appear above Gobnem, that is, it had moved recently into the 1 700-1 900 m zone.⁴ It was said to eat the grubs in taro corms.⁵ Fortunately, one had been killed the day before this conversation and it was possible to acquire its skull and jaw which looked, to an eye accustomed to that species' predominance at Karimui in South Simbu, as almost certainly a Common Echymipera (*Echymipera kalubu*). This identification was confirmed subsequently by Rose Singadan of the Biology Department at the University of Papua New Guinea, when Saem forwarded the skull

to the Department. This therefore adds a further species to the original mammal species list compiled by Bulmer and Menzies (1972-73) for the Kaironk Valley. Commenting on the draft chapter, Menzies (pers. comm., 30 August 1990) had already pointed out that this species was most unlikely to be absent from the Kaironk Valley.

There is no Kalam taxon equivalent to English 'bandicoot' or Pidgin *mumut*, though Saem and other Kalam clearly recognise the similarities between those animals of this group that they are familiar with. No small bandicoot species in the Kaironk region have been recorded. If any are present, they are not related by the Kalam to the large species which are common in this region, belonging to the genera *Microperoryctes*, *Peroryctes* and *Echymipera*.

The Kalam regard the large bandicoots as *knn*, 'game mammals', rather than *as*, 'small marsupials and rodents (other than unclean rats) and frogs'. The distinction (see Bulmer and Menzies 1972-73, especially 1972:487-90) has to do both with size and culinary importance. All *knn* can be ritually cooked in raised ovens in propitiation of the dead or of goblins (*kceki*) and are normally prepared in this way, whereas other marsupials and rodents never are. *Knn* include the larger terrestrial and arboreal mammals, which are hunted exclusively by men. Some *knn*, however, are frequently taken by women. Women do not climb trees, so their quarry are, normally, restricted to those small marsupials and rodents which live in low vegetation, such as the bandicoots and small dasyurids, or which live in and around streams, such as the Water-rat and Water-side Rat (see Chapter 13) and frogs. The bandicoots are women's prime game.

Saem's report that *wgi* only has one young at a time differs from other accounts elsewhere in New Guinea of *Microperoryctes longicauda* with two to four young (Hide et al. 1984:333; Menzies 1991:55). However, his observations of young staying with their mothers until quite large, and of several animals sharing a nest, are supported by other evidence (Hide et al. 1984:335; Menzies 1991:55). Their vulnerability to trapping is also described by Dwyer (1990:77) at Mt Sisa.

as a result she sometimes had a very good day's hunting, though there were also occasions when she walked great distances and came back empty-handed."

7 Elsewhere Saem has told of the Kalam belief that *wgi* and *gudl-ws*, along with *suatg*, *mug* and *katgn* visit the bower of the Gardener Bowerbird (*Amblyornis macgregoriae*) at night and dance, thus accounting for the firm, stamped down moss around the bower, a belief that may reflect their observation of mammal dung at such bowers (Majnep and Bulmer 1977:73).

8 Flannery (1995:114,120) gives 350-670 g as the weight range for *Microperoryctes longicauda*, compared to 650-1 000 g for *Peroryctes raffrayanus*. In both cases the sample sizes are small.

9 This account contrasts with reports from elsewhere which describe this species as mainly restricted to undisturbed forest (Flannery 1995:120; Menzies 1991:57; Dwyer 1983a:30; Hide et al. 1984:318-19).

PART VI

The Spotted Quoll; and the Water-rats and Water-side Rat

Introduction¹

Compiled by Andrew Pawley and Robin Hide

In chapters 12 and 13, Saem discusses, first, *suatg*, the Common Spotted Quoll, and then two kinds of rats: *godmg*, the Water-side Rat, and *kuypep*, the Water-rat. All three animals are classified as *kmn*, which includes the larger marsupials and rodents which are men's prime game, in contrast to *as*, small marsupials and rodents (other than unclean rats), many of which are mainly taken by women and children.

The *suatg*, *Dasyurus albopunctatus*², is the only fairly large carnivorous marsupial present in New Guinea and is so different in appearance from any other New Guinea mammal that there can be little confusion over its identity. It is a *kmn*, though Kalam note the morphological similarities between this fierce animal and the other much smaller dasyurids present in the area, which fall into the *as* group. Some Kalam say that *aln*, the small dasyurids, including *Phascosorex* and *Antechinus* (discussed in Chapter 15), grow into *suatg*. The *suatg*, whose name means, appropriately, 'bites on top', is said to be present both in the forest and the cultivation zone, but not in large numbers. The Kalam do not systematically hunt *suatg*, but people sometimes catch them in springes set for other animals and sometimes they come across and break into their nests under logs or trees, mistaking these for bandicoot nests.

In the past, the common English name for the *suatg* was the Native Cat, but as Menzies (1991:46) for one has argued, the term is not useful since they are not related to cats and share little similarity with cats. Indeed in several parts of Papua New Guinea, this animal

190-192

then appear, clinging to the sides of stones near the surface of the water, and people sometimes catch it then. It is widely distributed, in the rivers and in quite small brooks, right up into the beech forest. All I've heard about its breeding habits is that it has one offspring at a time. Whether it gives birth to this up in a hole in the rocks or in a nest it makes somewhere, I don't really know.

There are actually two kinds of Water-rat, large and small. It's the larger kind (that I've been describing) that has one baby at a time. The smaller kind (Shaw Mayer's Water-rat, *Hydromys shawmayeri*) is called *kuyep kuykuy-sek* (smelly *kuyep*'), and this lives in quite big families, several huddling up, one on top of the other, in the same nest. Young unmarried men and women don't eat this kapul, avoiding it because of its scent, which is quite rank, but they give any that they catch to old people or young children, who do cook and eat them. The smaller Water-rat, the one that lives in groups, has five or six offspring at a time, and the whole lot sleep together in one nest in a stream bank. If people disturb them, they all leap out into the water in a flash. Unlike the other sort, this kapul does run around freely on the banks of streams, feeding both there and in the water, on tadpoles and other things. When it hears people approach, rustling the foliage, it quickly makes for the water and gets from there into holes between the stones. By pulling out the stones, people can catch them.

Apart from young unmarried men and women not eating this kapul because of its smell, in the old days anyone who ate any Water-rat was absolutely prohibited from going near the *yamy* houses where men performed war ritual with exploding bamboo segments, because this is such a truly strange kapul (*knn ladv*). Unlike the true kapuls that are caught in large numbers and thus familiar to us, people only occasionally see and kill this animal. This is why I can't say much about its movements and its lair and its breeding habits. In the Asai Valley and Alokyañ region of Cdonj (northern lowlands), they call the Water-rat *ñgodm*.

This kapul's real cross-cousin is the eel, for they both live right in the water. In fact if the *kuyep* gets up onto the bank of the stream or

the dry rocks at a streamside, and tries to walk about there, it gets stuck and very soon can't move at all and dies. It can only move freely in the water, and in the plants that grow in the water. If you were to catch one and put it on the rocks or on dry ground, it would be unable to get away, and would die. In comparison with the arboreal kapuls, I don't know much about these animals they call *kuyep* and have only seen them once or twice. But some people are familiar with one or other and have told me a bit about it. The larger one is said to sleep under the rocks behind a waterfall, and to make the nest where it bears its offspring in a dry sheltered place in steep streamside rocks. When the baby has grown a bit, the mother leads it off, down into the water.

The lives of animals are not like the lives of human beings. People live in the open country, and their comings and their goings, and their dwellings and the way they walk about and how they sleep and eat, are easy to find out and write about. But this is not so with the animals, their lives are really hard to observe. So I've only been able to describe the little that we do see of their feeding habits and so forth. If only they were like us humans and could be seen going about their business in the open, I could really say a lot about them.

PART VII

The most important *as* mammals: the colonial-nesting small rodents, and some other small creatures of the forest

Introduction

Compiled by Robin Hide and Andrew Pawley

The small rodents found in the Kaironk Valley are a confusing group, both in terms of zoological identification and Kalam taxonomy. Bulmer and Menzies (1973:92) wrote:

"We have collected 13 species... and there are without doubt others that we have not obtained, and we have recorded 12 Kalam terminal taxa. Three terminal taxa fall into the primary taxon *kopyak* 'unclean rats'; the remainder, together with the two taxa applied to small marsupials, fall into the primary taxon *as*, which also includes frogs. Faced with difficulties of discriminating taxa which are identical or near-identical in superficial morphological characters, Kalam state explicitly that they take into account the location in which a creature was obtained and, particularly, the kind of nest or burrow it came from. But this apart, they do not appear to be as consistent in their use of morphological criteria for discriminating small mammal taxa as they are, for example, in discriminating birds or frogs".

The colonial nesting rodents, the most numerous and important *as*, are discussed in Chapter 14. *Yngem* is the taxon which the Kalam normally name first if asked to list the *as* mammals, and is the one which they seem to show the most interest in (Bulmer and Menzies 1973:95). Two kinds of *ymgenm* are distinguished by Saem, with the name applied principally to the handsome medium-sized Prehensile-tailed Rat, *Pogonomys loriae*,¹ which Kalam informants described as *ymgenm yb* 'true' or 'typical' *ymgenm*. This type has a distinctive white belly, short, soft brown fur and makes nests in underground burrows with an intricate system of entrances and escape routes. In practice,

1973-78

the taxon *ymgenm* was applied also by Kalam to two specimens of *Mammelomys lanosus*,² and one of *Melomys rufescens*.

The second kind of *ymgenm* is said to lack the distinctive white belly, to grow somewhat larger,³ and to live, not in underground nests but in holes in trees and tree-ferns. This type, sometimes distinguished as *ymgenm at-ket* 'ymgenm of the top', is believed to be able to turn into *skoyd* possums (see p. 132). However, the zoological identity of *ymgenm at-ket* remains uncertain. A single specimen of *Abeomelomys sevia*,⁴ caught in a hole in a tree at 2 100 m, was called *ymgenm* (Bulmer and Menzies 1973:96, 102). On the basis of its arboreal habit, and the fact that it lacked the white undersurface of *Pogonomys loriae* but was a reddish brown rat of roughly similar size, and had a prehensile tail, Bulmer and Menzies suggested that it might be *ymgenm at-ket*. They also speculated that the name might refer as well to *Pogonomelomys mayeri* (Shaw Mayer's *Pogonomelomys*). Although not collected in the Kaironk area with Kalam identification, skulls and/or mandibles recovered from owl pellet material were assigned to this species (Bulmer and Menzies 1972:483, 489; Bulmer and Menzies 1973:96). This is a larger animal (see fn.3), about which, as late as 1979, "nothing at all is known about its habits" (Menzies and Dennis 1979:39). Fifteen years later, this still held, with the additional information that it apparently makes its nests above ground (Flannery 1995:314).

By the time he came to draft this book, however, Bulmer apparently had changed his mind about the zoological identification of *ymgenm at-ket*. In the draft of Chapter 14, Bulmer added (in the chapter heading), to the animals classed as *ymgenm*, the Little Ringtail, *Pseudochirulus mayeri*, the rarest and smallest⁵ of the four local Ringtails, but made no mention of *Pogonomelomys mayeri* (Shaw Mayer's *Pogonomelomys*). Similarly, in Part III Introduction (p. 100, and Chapter 8, p. 132) he described *Pseudochirulus mayeri* as "probably *ymgenm at-ket* to Kalam", and in Part II Introduction (p. 45), he referred to Saem grouping this Little Ringtail with some rodents as *ymgenm*. This identification of the marsupial Little Ringtail

The young are sometimes born in pairs, sometimes three at a time. When they live in dry *alhaw* pandan foliage, and in other similar places, they run off up the trees in all directions when they are disturbed, twitching their noses as they go.

I don't know precisely what they feed on, but I'm told that they find various little things to eat as they run around in the lianes and the trees.

When people are out hunting for kapuls in the bush, they may kill this little animal if they feel like doing so, but often, when it's run off up a nearby tree, we just let it be, because it's so small.

Formerly women who wore wigs didn't eat this little animal when they had recently set their headresses up, nor men who were treating their hair with *marita* oil, nor boys who had recently had their nasal septa pierced in initiation. Today too, boys who have been initiated don't eat them. The only animals they can eat are kapuls, not little creatures; and though they can eat birds, they can only eat the birds that live up in the trees, not the little ones that hop about on the ground.

After we had eaten this animal, we wouldn't go behind the back of a man who had learned magic, nor could we share food with him. We also didn't go near the *yamy* cult houses. Also, if we had eaten this or other similar small creatures, we couldn't eat food cooked on the fires of men who knew magic, we had to eat food cooked at hearths that were separated from theirs.

In the forests where it lives, this funny little creature is quite often to be seen during the day, running around in the trees looking for things to eat. Unlike true kapuls, which are hunted while they sleep, these animals sometimes sleep and sometimes come out and run around in the bush in the day time. After they've slept for a while they get restless and come out for a bit, before going back again into their nests again to sleep. By four o'clock or half past four in the afternoon, the light is just beginning to fade in the heart of the forest. These small animals, *tumuk-as*, *yngem*, *stay*, *kaign* and *gkep*, come out early, in the late afternoon, because, deep in the shade of the forest, light fades before it does up in the tree tops, where the true kapuls sleep.

So the true kapuls come out later, when it's really got dark, whereas the small animals come out earlier, because it gets to be dusk down on ground sooner (than it does up in the trees). If I were able to describe how we found the tracks made by these as when they go out to feed, like we do those of the big kapuls and other creatures, and how we followed these, up and down, and eventually caught them, I could continue at some length. (But since we don't do these things, I can't.) So I shall stop at this point.

Note

- 1 This has not been found.

PART VIII

Common small ground mammals of the higher forest

Introduction

Compiled by Robin Hide

In Chapter 16, Saem describes two terrestrial rats, *as mug*, the Bush Rat (*Mammelomys lanosus*)¹, and *as katgn*, the Small Mountain Rat (*Rattus niobe*). Bulmer and Menzies (1973:94-5,102) found that Kalam fairly consistently identified specimens of *Mammelomys lanosus* as *mug*, as they did *Rattus niobe* for *katgn*. Although Saem himself inclines to the view that *mug* and *katgn* are the same animal, and admits not being able to tell them apart, he defers to others more knowledgeable about these small rats, who do distinguish them. Both are said by Kalam to be mainly animals of the high-altitude forest. Kalam women told Inge Riebe that *katgn* make U-shaped burrows with two entrances, in contrast to the simple short holes of *kopyak* and *walcogon*. Both kinds are believed by Kalam to 'plant' the nuts of the mountain pandanus (*kumi* and *aljaw*) first burying some of the fallen nuts and then digging them up and re-burying them after they've sprouted.

At one point (p. 234) Saem refers to *kmm mug*, although elsewhere it is clear that *mug* is firmly in the *as* category. Although apparently odd, this illustrates the loose use of *kmm* to occasionally refer to members of the *as* class.

Note

- 1 *Melomys lorentzi* in earlier publications (Bulmer and Menzies 1972:73). The genus was revised by Menzies (1996).



PLATE 14
Mug, Bush Rat
(*Mammelomys lanosus*)

walcogn, which live lower down in the grasslands and around settlements where they feed on people's rubbish.

And so I've come to the end.

Notes

- 1 *Melomys lorentzi* in earlier publications (Bulmer and Menzies 1972-73). The genus was revised by Menzies (1996).
- 2 For instance, *as gkep*, see Chapter 14.

PART IX

Two common small mammals of the grasslands: *sumsum* and *alks*

Introduction

Compiled by Robin Hide

Sumsum, the Pygmy Possum (*Cercartetus caudatus*), is a tiny marsupial, weighing ca. 20 g and in overall length less than 300 mm. It is found between 1 500 and 3 450 m elsewhere in New Guinea, and at lower altitudes in Australia (Flannery 1995:192-93). According to Saem, it is not found above about 2 300 m in the Kaironk region, and as Dwyer (1977) found at Mt Erimbari, it appears to favour secondary growth and long grassland, though it is also found in forest.

Although *Cercartetus caudatus* is classed by Kalam with other small rodents (and one, at least, other marsupial – *Antechinus melanurus*), as an *as*, they recognise that these two marsupials have pouches (Bulmer and Menzies 1973:92). As Menzies (1991:84) emphasises, this small marsupial is easily mistaken for an arboreal rodent, especially seen at night.

The Kalam name has two connotations, 'blossom' and the colour white or greyish white.

Saem's observations relating to litter size (one to four), and nest locations in pitpit and pandanus, accord closely with Dwyer's (1977:71) records from Mt Erimbari (Eastern Highlands Province) in 1972. Dwyer observed litter sizes from one to three, and suggested that litters of three may be common. He noted that nests in pitpit and under the dead fronds of pandanus were most common. Dwyer also recorded the varied size of groups found within a single nest, though, since animals commonly escaped capture when nests were located, exact numbers could not be determined.

Although Saem notes only the fruit components of its diet,

that they believed that a man with dangerous ritual knowledge, who performed the war magic with exploding bamboo segments, would die if they were to go near him, for his guts would rupture internally and his belly swell up; and if he died the smell of his decomposing corpse (from his burial platform near the settlement) would kill them as well.

People of the open country, who don't hunt for bandicoots and arboreal kapuls in the forest, and also their children, hunt for this *as* and eat it. But people like my relatives who live in the forest or where there are plenty of second-growth trees about, eat the familiar kapuls and *as* of the bush above us, and if we are offered *as* from the open country, we don't feel we can eat them. Even though people here down in the open country hunt for these sorts of creatures in the swordgrass and give them to their children to make them grow, we in bush areas regard these animals with revulsion.

After eating these small *as* people don't go into new gardens, either of taro or of sweet potato, believing that if they do the animals will come and gnaw and rip out their newly planted crops. So there are times when people don't go into garden areas because of this taboo.

Now what I have to say about *sumsum* is completed.

AS ALKS, THE SHORT-SNOURED WHITE-BELLIED RATS (*MELOMYS RUFESCENS* AND *M. ?FRIGICOLA*)

Now I'm going to talk about the animal they call *as alks* (Short-snoured White-bellied Rats, *Melomys rufescens* and *M. ?frigicola*). *Alks* is like *ymgenm*, except that *ymgenm* is rather larger. Its fur is greyish-brown. The male's genitals are like those of *knn abben* and *knn mosak*, fastened tight up under the body. The female suckles its young externally, thought how many it has at a time I don't know.

I can only report what's said about it, that its food includes the fruit of wild pepper trees and vines, and little plants that grow among the casuarinas, and that it lives in nests it constructs in cane-grass and reeds and in swordgrass foliage. It's said that when it's caught

it's treated like a true kapul, and that some men, even some young unmarried men, used to eat it. They'd take the animals home and cook them in the stone-ovens. The *alks* is found in open country down into Kopon and, they say, right on down into the warm lowlands below. It's said that formerly, when they wanted to catch *alks* they'd gather ripe wild pepper fruit and put it in a heap (on the ground, or perhaps on a suitable tree-stump or low branch) and then tie vine ropes running off to tree branches in different directions (for the animals to run along). And then they'd set a trap on top of the heap of pepper fruit, and this way they'd quickly catch some. People, both adults and children, who live or have lived in the open country are familiar with *alks*'s habits and its nests and know a lot about it. But I live by the bush and don't have this knowledge, so I will end my account of it now.

Note

- 1 *Melomys ?lutillus* in earlier publications (Bulmer and Menzies 1972-73). The genus was revised by Menzies (1996).

PART X

Kopyak: the Dirty Rat

Introduction

Compiled by Robin Hide

Kalam use the term *kopyak*¹ in two ways: as a generic or primary term meaning 'unclean or dirty rats', and as an unmarked secondary term contrasting with *walcogon*, 'small dirty rats', and *gulbodu* 'large dirty rats' (Bulmer and Menzies (1973:93). While Saem does not use or refer to the latter term, he does distinguish between larger and smaller dirty rats, applying *walcogon* to the small kind.

Bulmer and Menzies (1973:93) noted that *kopyak* as a generic was applied to "all rats of the genus *Rattus* which are found in or near homesteads and, somewhat randomly, to identical or similar creatures found in other locations, particularly if the precise circumstances of their capture are unknown". *Kopyak* are regarded as 'dirty', and thus tabooed as human food, because they are alleged to eat faeces and other dirt and rubbish associated with settlements, as well as (previously) human corpses in exposed graves. Bulmer and Menzies (1973:93, 102) found that *kopyak* was applied primarily to *Rattus exulans* (commonly the Pacific Rat), and *Rattus steini*² (the Small Spiny Rat), the two small rodent species which are most commonly associated with rural settlements in New Guinea (Bulmer and Menzies 1973; Dwyer 1978a, 1978b, 1984). These two animals are similar in appearance (except size, see below), and there appears to be a considerable overlap in terms of their diets (Menzies and Dennis 1979:23, 29-30; McPhee 1988:97-9, 101). Although Kalam also applied *kopyak* to some specimens of two other species, *Rattus niobe* and *Rattus verecundus*, all *R. niobe* caught in the forest were called *katgn* or *sjan*, and the great majority of *R. verecundus* caught away from

settlements were called *sjan* (Bulmer and Menzies 1973:93, 102).

With size as the criterion, it might be expected that *walcogon* would apply primarily to *Rattus exulans*, which, at about 50 g, is roughly half the weight of *Rattus steini* (Dwyer 1975:35; Flannery 1995:59, 336-37). Indeed, four of five specimens identified as *walcogon* to Bulmer were *R. exulans*: 11 other *R. exulans*, however, were simply called *kopyak* (Bulmer and Menzies 1973:102). Similarly, Saem's observation that it is only *walcogon* which enters houses accords with the findings of Bulmer and Menzies (1973:93) that *R. exulans* is the main species inside Kalam houses. The term *gulbodu*, while not used by Saem, was only applied by other Kalam, as expected in accordance with the size criterion, to some *R. steini*, and not to *R. exulans* (Bulmer and Menzies 1973:102).

Saem's report of one to four offspring fits quite closely with zoological observations of a range from one to five for *R. exulans* and one to six for *R. steini*, with an average for both ranging from about three (Dwyer 1975:39; 1978a:225-26) to four or five (McPhee 1988; Taylor et al. 1990).

The close association between *kopyak* and humans in Kalam thought is emphasised in a story told to Bulmer by Simon Peter Gi in 1973 (Bulmer, Menzies and Parker 1975:303).

"A very long time ago, rat and snake (*soyy*) had an argument. Rat said: 'I shall die first and my body will rot away, and after that all people will die and rot, they won't be able to change their skins'. Snake said: 'Rat, you wait, I shall die first and I won't rot, I will just shed my skin and, inside, my body will be renewed: if I do this, then men and women will do likewise'. But Rat said: 'No, I don't want you to do that, I shall die and men and women will copy me'. He did so, and since then people have followed the example of the rat."

Notes

- 1 *Kopyak* is a common alternative form in *Ti mun*.
- 2 Identified as *Rattus ruber* in earlier publications (i.e., Bulmer and Menzies 1973).

into bags of sweet potato or of little bits of food in no time at all, and people are disturbed by the noise the animals make. Thus, if they just leave their bags with food in them, they won't get much sleep. So, to prevent the rats chewing up the bags, they tip out their contents, and then they can sleep.

Formerly, rats would make nests in gourds used to evaporate brine to make salt, either when these were empty or when they had dry sugar-cane pith in them, and sleep in there. But they make nests in gaps under the eaves of houses, as well as in gourds, and between the layers of woven flattened reeds in the walls of modern houses – in fact wherever they can drag material in to make a nest, they'll do so.

That's all I have to say about *kopyak*.

PART XI

Mammals of the warm lowlands

Introduction

Compiled by Robin Hide

In this chapter Saem takes a regional perspective and presents information, obtained from relatives and friends, on animals which are not found in the Middle and Upper Kaironk Valley but in nearby lowland areas to the north and south. As he outlined in Chapter 3, to the north is Cdoŋ, the lowland area around Aiome in the Ramu Valley including the Lower Simbai and Asai valleys: to the south is Numul, the lowland part of the Jimi Valley. Although the altitudinal range of these lowlands is from 100 m near the Ramu River up to about 1 500 or 1 600 m, it is the plains at the lower altitudes that are considered typical of these zones. The lowlands are characterised by warmer climatic conditions, supporting different vegetation and some different animals. In both areas, the larger marsupials are of particular interest to Kalam.

SPOTTED CUSCUS

Despite the elaboration of Kalam terms (*takp*, *magey*, *aklay* and *gabi*) described by Saem, it is likely that only two species are involved, the Spotted Cuscus, *Spilocuscus maculatus*,¹ and the much rarer Black-spotted Cuscus, *S. rufoniger*. Ralph Bulmer considered that *gabi* might also include the latter (see p. 260), although, until 1995, this seemed unlikely since survey work by Flannery in the north coast region had failed to yield a single specimen. Indeed, Flannery (1995:186) suggested that it might now be extinct in this area, noting that Jonathon Kingdon, who

- 8 decide about its fate, before it was clubbed, cooked and eaten.” Also *nakdoy may* (pp. 153, 158), which is reported as being the same animal as *madaw* (Ground Cuscus), though larger and with shorter fur.
- 9 *Abben* is presumably here a mistake for *kabkal* (Lowland Giant Tree-rat, see pp. 92-4).
- 10 This term was not recorded during earlier work (Bulmer and Menzies 1973:87-8, 105), but Saem suggests (p. 38) that it might be a form of *pakam*, the Hunting Bandicoot. The three possible bandicoot species mentioned in the Introduction to this chapter as candidates for *cemen*, are also relevant here, though neither the size of the animals nor the specific restriction to the lowland plains (and to *Imperata* grassland in particular), in Saem’s account of Glay’s description provide any obvious fit.
- 11 But the description could also apply to a lower altitude cuscus (see p. 65, fn.26, and Chapter 6).
- 12 Unidentified tree, possibly *Cryptocarya* sp. or *Melicope* sp.

PART XII

Dogs, wild dogs and spirit dogs

Introduction

Compiled by Robin Hide

In this Part, Saem turns to discuss dogs – first, the domestic animals which play a vital role in Kalam hunting, and second, the wild or feral dogs which are found in some parts of the Kaironk forests, and those in the neighbouring Jimi Valley (Healey 1991:238), in very small numbers.

Although Bulmer never wrote at length on dogs in Kalam culture, in the course of his major essay on the cassowary, he summarised succinctly his then understanding of the position of dogs.

“Dog...has in some ways a more complicated position than the cassowary. Taxonomically it is harder to sort it out by size, morphology or behaviour from mammals in the *knn* class...than it is to extract cassowary from the birds. The two anatomical features of the dog which Kalam comment on in a number of contexts are its mouth and its prominent male genitalia. But cosmologically the dog is very special: a wild forest animal which ought by rights to be kept far away from homesteads and gardens, but which Kalam nevertheless tame and use to help them hunt other animals and which, when it is in human settlements, manages to eat filth, get into graves, and do quite a lot of material and social damage by stealing food and killing piglets, both its owner’s and other people’s. Thus dogs break two kinds of boundaries, those between forest and cultivation, and those which attempt to separate the clean and the unclean (male and female, live and dead, kin and non-kin) within human settlements. It is not surprising that there is a complete prohibition on killing forest dogs, that domestic pigs must be killed without

Lower Kaironk Valley, where favoured animals were sometimes awarded special platform burials (Jackson 1991:269). Sterly (1962) and Baldwin (1990) provide useful accounts of the wider roles of dogs in Melanesia generally. Some of their special uses in hunting animals such as tree kangaroos and echidnas elsewhere in New Guinea were described by Van Deusen (1972), who also noted that many have gone feral and roam the mountain ridges hunting such animals as wallaby, bandicoot, giant rats, Ground Cuscus and *Pseudochirops cupreus*, traces of which are evident in their faeces.

It is not only among the Kalam in the Kaironk area that dogs, wild ones in particular, have a complex mythic or mystical status. Similar accounts have been reported for the Miyanmin and other areas of West Sepik Province (Morren 1986:127; Jorgensen 1999; Blinkoff 1999). In the Southern Highlands, the Mt Giluwe area is believed by the Kewa people to be inhabited by wild dogs that are associated with mystical danger and, although their cries are heard and tracks seen, they are avoided by choice (Franklin 1972).

Earlier (p. 143), Saem writes that Kalam consider that dogs are the cross-cousin of *bic*, the Striped Possum (*Dactylopsila palpator*), and that this affects their behaviour toward them. The special status of dogs and *bic*, as well as that of some other species, in Kalam thought is discussed further by Bulmer (1978).

Note

- 1 There are two main web sites with information: www.RareBreed.com, and the New Guinea Singing Dog Conservation Society at www.CanineWorld.com/NGSDCS. See also the account by Sarah Christie at <http://www.animalnetwork.com/dogs/profiles/profileview.asp?RecordNo=459>.

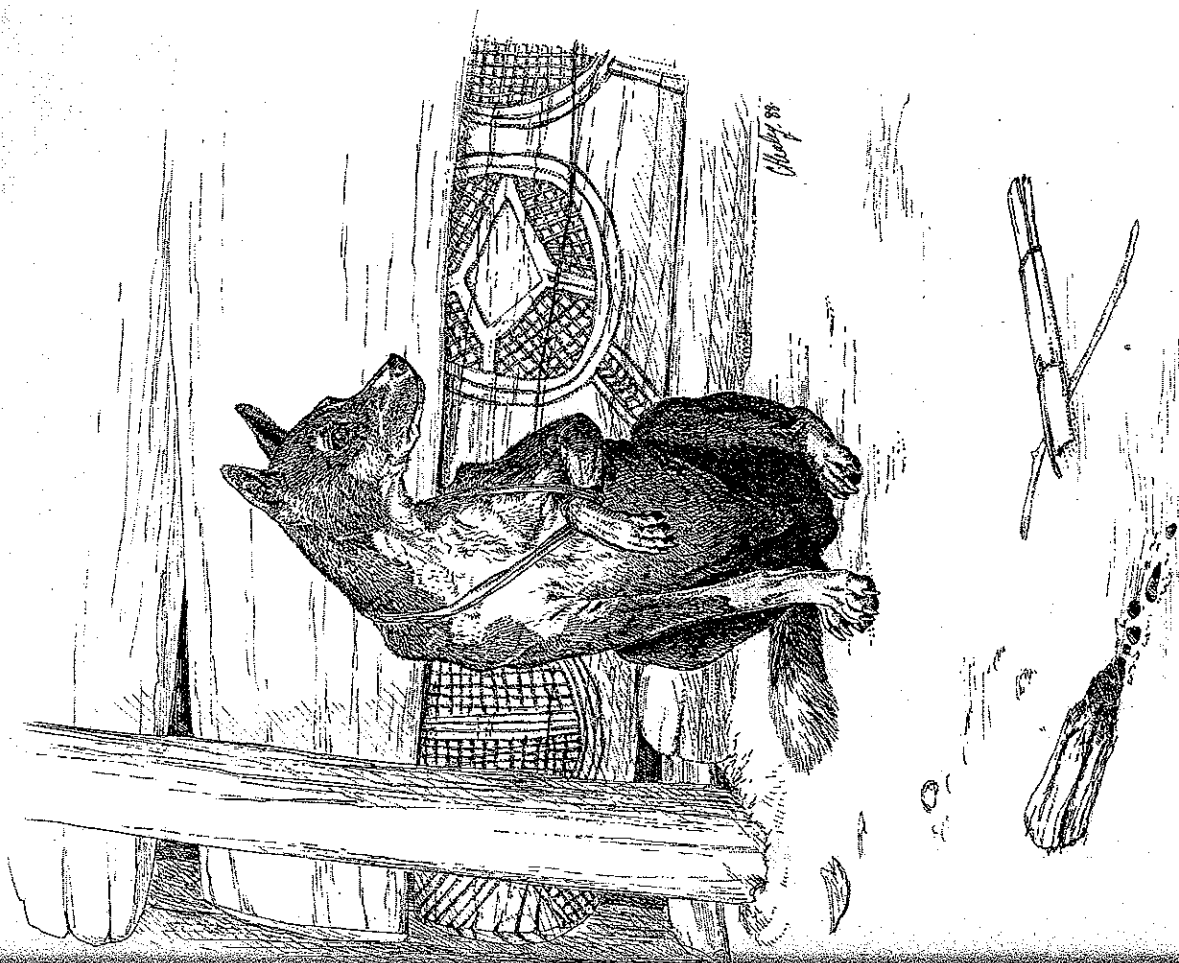


PLATE 18
Kain, Domestic Dog
(*Canis familiaris*)

This is a very special kind of animal book. The first author is a Papua New Guinean who gives an insider's view of the wild mammals of his home area. Ian Saem Majnep was born among the Kalam people of the Upper Kaironk Valley, in the Schrader Ranges on the northern fringes of the New Guinea Highlands, some years before Europeans first entered the area in the 1950s. He grew up on the edge of the cool upper montane forest, hunting, foraging and gardening and absorbing an immense body of traditional knowledge about animals and wider Kalam natural history.

Some 53 species of wild terrestrial mammals (28 marsupials, 24 rodents and the wild New Guinea singing dog) are present in and near the Kaironk Valley. The Kalam high-order taxonomy of mammals is very different to that of Western zoologists. They divide terrestrial mammals into two broad categories: Kmn 'game mammals', that is, the larger marsupials and giant rats, that are mainly arboreal and are men's prime game, and as 'small mammals (and frogs)', that are mainly ground-dwelling and are hunted chiefly by women. In over twenty chapters, Saem describes these animals, grouping them in terms of their appearance, habitats and behaviour. While focussed on hunting, Saem shows how Kalam animal lore is woven into the customary life of his people. Over the past 50 years the Kalam have gone from pre-contact isolation to partial participation in the modern world. This shift has come at a price - much of the natural history knowledge that Saem records is in danger of being lost to younger Kalam, and to the scientific world.

Saem's co-author, Ralph Bulmer, was Professor of Anthropology at the University of Papua New Guinea from 1968-1973 and then at the University of Auckland until his premature death in 1988. In 1960 Bulmer initiated an interdisciplinary team study of Kalam society, language and perception and use of the natural environment. Much of his own fieldwork was devoted to ethnobiology. Saem became his leading field assistant and then his co-author. Their first book was the ground-breaking *Birds of My Kalam Country* (1977). Saem then began to write in Kalam the core chapters of *Animals the Ancestors Hunted*, which Bulmer translated and began to edit. After Bulmer's death the English text was edited for publication by Andrew Pawley and Robin Hide.



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ISBN 1-86333-298-7



\$39.95 inc. GST

Papua New Guinea
Natural History