

A moth that feeds on Drosera. Qd. Nat. 17:31.

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SPIDER EGG SACS IN A HONEYEATER'S NEST

A Brown Honeyeater's nest, collected by Mrs. W. D. McKenzie, was of great interest because of the large number of Arachnid egg sacs lining the nest and carefully interwoven between the grasses, etc.

The egg sacs of a spider are so closely woven that they are impervious to water and the birds have found this advantage, coupled with the tremendous strength of the spider web, produces a perfect building material. This honeyeater had discovered that the outside casing added strength and the egg sac itself provided a downy lining for her offspring's cradle. The nest was completely lined with inner sacs of the little flat Fairy Huntsman Spider (*Hemicloea plumea*) that we often see hiding in the crevices of fence posts or disappearing behind loose tree bark. The number of included sacs indicated that there must be a great number of this species in the vicinity of Mrs. McKenzie's garden. Threaded carefully into the outside of this cosy little home were a number of the egg sacs of the Black House Spider (*Ixeuticus robustus*) and one egg sac stolen from the St. Andrew's Cross (*Argyope aetheria*).

—M. E. HALL

A MOTH THAT FEEDS ON DROSERA

Although it is well known that species of *Drosera* capture insects and absorb nitrogen from their decomposing bodies, probably few people realise that these plants also serve as insect food.

Specimens of *Drosera indica*, collected from a damp roadside bank near Atkinson's Lagoon in the Lockyer district on 18 March 1962, had many small insects entangled among the glandular hairs of the leaves. Crawling freely between these hairs were small lepidopterous larvae, while pupae of two species of Lepidoptera were attached to the under side of leaves. Adults of one species of plume moth (Fam. Pterophoridae) were reared by Miss M. Tesch and identified by Mr. I. F. B. Common as *Trichoptilus* sp., probably *scythrodes* Meyrick. Mr. Common notes that, according to Meyrick, the larvae of the Palaearctic species *T. paludum* feed on *Drosera rotundifolia* (so it is not impossible that the genus *Trichoptilus* may be confined to this host), but that this appears to be the first record of Pterophoridae feeding on *Drosera* in Australia.

—E. N. MARKS

DENDRITES

Many, varied, inorganic rock structures are brought in to museums by collectors who think that they have found fossils.

For many years some quite ordinary ironstone concretions, dug from the mine, were on show in a display in Mt. Morgan, identified by a local doctor as casts of specified human bones! I hope that he was not a surgeon. Perhaps the commonest of these *lusus naturae* which regularly are received are dendrites—mossy-like, many-branching (dendritic) markings upon a split rock face that finders so often confuse with fossil plants.

Dendrites are not organic. They occur along joint planes of a rock (any planes, not merely the bedding planes), and they look like mossy structures radiating from the edges of the joint. You can get precisely the same kind of impression, uncannily similar, if you press the buttery blade of a knife upon a plate (try this next time when you are at table), when the air being squeezed out of the plane between blade and plate oozes through the buttery film in this branching, mossy manner.

When squeezed air moves through a thin but mobile film, perhaps of mud, in the close joint of a rock, and water containing some pigment such as manganese or iron oxides follows, the pigment is deposited in this striking form.

An abundant source of very lovely dendrites available at the moment is in the quarry on Mt. Coolum where a finely jointed volcanic rock bears them profusely, in black and brown pigments on a light background of the volcanic rock.

— F. W. WHITEHOUSE