

Mr Longman's hunter and collector: J. Edgar Young and the Queensland Museum

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ABSTRACT

J. Edgar Young (1871–1956) was a Queensland field naturalist who was well known in his day. He assisted Hubert Wilkins on his Australian collecting expedition for the British Museum in 1923, and then became an honorary collector for the Queensland Museum. This was at a time when the museum did not have the staff or resources for collecting specimens, relying on public assistance. Young ranged widely throughout Queensland for some 20 years collecting fauna and flora, taking part in official expeditions to the Low Isles on the Great Barrier Reef and the Carnarvon Ranges. Most significantly, he discovered the most complete specimen of a Cretaceous ichthyosaur (*Platypterygius australis*) near Hughenden. Young was a prolific contributor to natural history activities in Queensland, and his fossil discovery has greatly assisted palaeontological understanding of the Australian Ichthyosauria. This paper traces Young's life and career, his travels, contributions and achievements.

Historical and significant contributions to museum collections by amateur naturalists (the so-called ‘gentlemen collectors’) and curious and diligent members of the public, are well-known. Indeed, in the early decades of the Queensland Museum the collection was dependent on the contributions of a public eager to assist the growth of the local institution. The museum’s historical donor registers amply document the volume and variety of specimens that were sent in from all parts of the state.

In January 1924, one dedicated naturalist offered his services to Heber Longman (1880–1954), the Director of the Museum (Gill 1986, Turner 2005). He sought only payment of out-of-pocket expenses and transport, along with appropriate government permits for collecting.

This was J. Edgar Young, by then a well-known Queensland field naturalist, and a man with long-standing and wide experience in field collecting (Fig. 1). He was ideal for the job, but it was a job he made his own, most likely instigated and encouraged by Longman, with whom Young was closely associated professionally and personally. Young’s collecting produced, in particular, an important Cretaceous marine fossil for the Museum’s collection that is still a feature of public exhibitions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Digital and physical archival searches (including both registers and correspondence files) at the Queensland Museum, the State Library of Queensland and the Queensland State Archives were essential for this study, as was the National Library of Australia’s Trove newspaper archive. Image quality was adjusted using Topaz AI.

Young's early career

Young lived in Graceville, Brisbane, on a large property called ‘Molonga’. He was clearly a man of some means. His father Edwin had been a partner in E. and J. Young, grocers at 183 Queen St (where the Wintergarden mall is now located), but retired early and took up land at Yatala and then Southport (East 2020, Anon. 1922).

Edgar was born in 1871 and educated at Ipswich Grammar School. He moved to Sydney to train as an architect with Walter Vernon (1846–1914), who later became the NSW Government Architect and created many well-known buildings such as the Art Gallery of NSW, the Mitchell Library and Central Station. Young returned to Queensland, at Beenleigh south of Brisbane, practising there as an architect from 1903–1906 and in Brisbane from 1912–14 (Watson & McKay 1984, p. 212). In Beenleigh he was an active

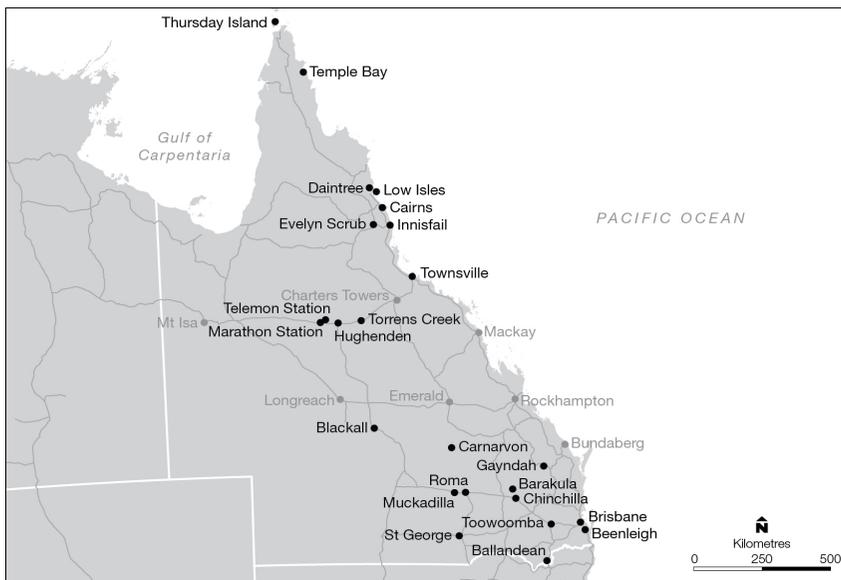


Figure 1. Map of Queensland, showing main locations of J. Edgar Young’s collecting.

community member, joining the Beenleigh Rifle Club and shooting regularly in competitions at state level, as well as assisting the Bushman's Fund to support the Boer War (Anon. 1900, Anon. 1901a, Anon. 1903).

It was in Beenleigh that he met his future wife, Ruby Johnstone (1880–1956), daughter of R.A. Johnstone (1843–1905) and his wife Maria (1847–1923). Johnstone was a North Queensland bushman and pastoralist, former Native Police officer, and later a police magistrate in towns such as Winton. He had relocated to Beenleigh upon his retirement (Jones 1972). Young married Ruby in 1901 (Anon. 1901b), and they moved to Graceville in 1911. They had three children, Elsa (who married Percy Milner, a nephew of the late Lord Northcliffe, British media baron), Ruby (who married Arthur Stephens, a dairy farmer from south of Beaudesert in south-east Queensland) and Harold (who married Hazel Sinclair).

Young was said 'to prefer an outdoor life' (Anon. 1932), and pursued farming and grazing on the South Coast and the eastern Darling Downs between doing work as an architect. He and his wife ran a property called 'Hambledon', at Wellcamp near Toowoomba from at least 1905, and were closely involved in the local farming community. He drew up the plans and specifications for the Wellcamp Methodist Church and oversaw its construction in 1905. In the Toowoomba Royal Agricultural Show in 1908, Edgar took the prize for ensilage (stored cattle feed) in the farm produce section, while the following year his black mare took the prize in the 12 hands or under pony class. His wife won the ladies carriage driving competition, where '...the decision was very popular with the crowd' (Anon. 1905, Anon. 1908, Anon. 1909).

Farming did not last, and the family bought nine acres in Graceville in 1911, between Long Street and Bank Road. They named the homestead 'Molonga', which still stands in the street that took its name. Edgar undertook more work as an architect, and his activities between 1914 and 1923 seem to have been focused on natural history.

The Field Naturalists' Club for Brisbane was formed as a section of the Royal Society of Queensland in 1886. Supported and encouraged by leading Queensland figures of science and natural history, it re-formed in 1906 as a new Field Naturalists Club,

later becoming the Queensland Naturalists Club and Nature Lovers' League in 1922. Young was elected as a member of the Field Naturalists Club in 1914, writing an article for its journal *The Queensland Naturalist* in October 1921 about 'Some North Queensland birds' (Young 1921). He was a keen participant in club field trips, reporting regularly on botanical and ornithological matters. He moved a vote of thanks to Heber Longman for his June 1922 talk to the club on marsupials (Longman 1922a, Turner 2005), and expressed his strong views against merging the club with the Gould League of Bird Lovers in a July letter to the *Brisbane Courier*. Young became the club president in 1928–29 and again in 1936. As a field naturalist and local resident, Young supported the establishment of the Sherwood Arboretum and took part in the initial planting ceremony in 1925. He was also a member of the Historical Society of Queensland.

His wife Ruby was herself an accomplished equestrienne, and was active in many social organisations, such as the Red Cross Society, the Presbyterian Church in Sherwood, the Queensland Women's Electoral League and the Boy Scouts. She was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1930 (Anon. 1914, Anon. 1930).

The Wilkins expedition

In 1922 the British Museum (Natural History) engaged Captain G. Hubert Wilkins (1888–1958) to lead an expedition to Australia to collect fauna for its collection. Among other exploits, Wilkins was well-known for his work as an Australian war photographer on the Western Front in 1917–1918 (where he won an MC and bar), and had served as an ornithologist on the 1921–22 Shackleton-Rowett expedition to Antarctica, which got no further than South Georgia Island once Ernest Shackleton died (Thomas 1961, Nasht 2005). Wilkins's Australian expedition was to gather 'this rapidly disappearing fauna' and to document in a modern and systematic scientific fashion the variety and distribution of species (Anon. 1923a). The expedition was at the urgings of Clive Lord (1889–1933), Director of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, who wrote to the British Museum in 1921 and emphasised the difficulty of Australian institutions undertaking such a task (Harris 2016).

Wilkins planned to engage local staff to assist him on the expedition and, from 150 applicants, select four. Edgar Young was one of those chosen. He was said to have 'had a great deal of experience in the Queensland bush and back country, and is a keen collector and student of natural history life. He will act as assistant collector in the mammalogical section'. (Anon. 1923b). His additional role was as a botany collector.

From April 1923, Young spent the rest of the year with the Wilkins party, travelling first to St George and then to Cape York Peninsula (Fig. 2), Torrens Creek, Flinders River and Hughenden in north Queensland, and finally Blackall in Central Queensland. In Wilkins's four reports to the British Museum (Wilkins 1923), and in the book he published later (Wilkins 1928), he speaks warmly of the work done by Young and his colleagues in often hot and difficult conditions. Young, he said, 'was always busy and thoughtful of the comfort of others' (p. 62). He was also 'our most successful hunter at night; he seemed to have a special eye for the dull red orbs of staring animals' (p. 49). In the foreword to his book Wilkins paid tribute to Young for his 'generous assistance'.

Observations from Cape Grenville and nearby Temple Bay in northern Cape York, which they reached by a Customs Service motorboat from Thursday Island some 250 km to the north, noted:

The vegetation was of special interest, for this area had not been previously visited by a botanist, and one of the interesting discoveries we made was a most conspicuous flowering tree which was quite new to science. It was perhaps the most conspicuous tree in bloom during our visit and, because of this, we could hardly believe it was new. In the rich soil near the beach it grew to a height of forty feet or more, but it was dwarfed on the rocky hills. This tree belonged to the genus *Xanthostemon*, which includes the well-known penda trees, so common in Queensland. It has been named *Xanthostemon youngii* after Mr Young, who first observed it. The brilliant red, drooping flowers with golden-yellow pendant pistils proved the brightest colouring that we noticed on the Peninsula. (Wilkins 1928, p. 47; White & Francis 1926)

Inland from Temple Bay, Young also collected the first Queensland record of the fern *Taenitis blechnoides* (Willd.) Sw. 1806. Young and others returned by boat to Thursday Island, while Wilkins (accompanied by his Aboriginal guide Johnny) trekked across the Great Divide to the Moreton Telegraph Station on the Wenlock River, then south to the Batavia goldfields, Coen and Port Stewart, a journey of over 300 km. He took a steamer to Townsville where he re-joined his party after four weeks. From there the expedition headed west to Torrens Creek near Hughenden.

During their stay near Torrens Creek, despite the very dry conditions, they collected several species of macropod along with koalas, native cats and an echidna. Young also located a fossil bed from which they extracted marine fossils and found 'huge bodies of the saurian type'. Of the latter 'many were over thirty feet in length and were much too large and heavy to transport to London' (Wilkins 1923, Wilkins 1928). Yet Wilkins returned to Hughenden in mid-1924 after Young had left the expedition, determined to excavate these vertebrate fossils. He identified ichthyosaur remains at Stewart Creek, claimed then to be 'the largest and best preserved of any that have been discovered in Australia', and Cretaceous fish, including squamation of *Richmondichthys sweeti* Etheridge Jr. & Woodward 1891 (Wilkins 1928, pp. 114–116, 284). The fossils were transported initially to the Queensland Museum and then to London, where they are now part of the collection of the Natural History Museum, along with the other fauna specimens collected. Young's botanical collecting for the Torrens Creek area included a new species of *Grevillea*, *G. sessilis* C.T. White & W.D. Francis 1926, and an additional locality for *Acacia uncifera* Benth. 1848.

The Queensland Museum collector

Young put himself forward to Longman in January 1924 as an official 'collector' for the Queensland Museum (Queensland Museum 1924–1938). His qualifications were his rich and varied experience of collecting under difficult conditions in remote areas on the Wilkins expedition, along with his previous field naturalist activities and broad interests in flora and fauna. He refers to a conversation that they had 'a few days ago' where

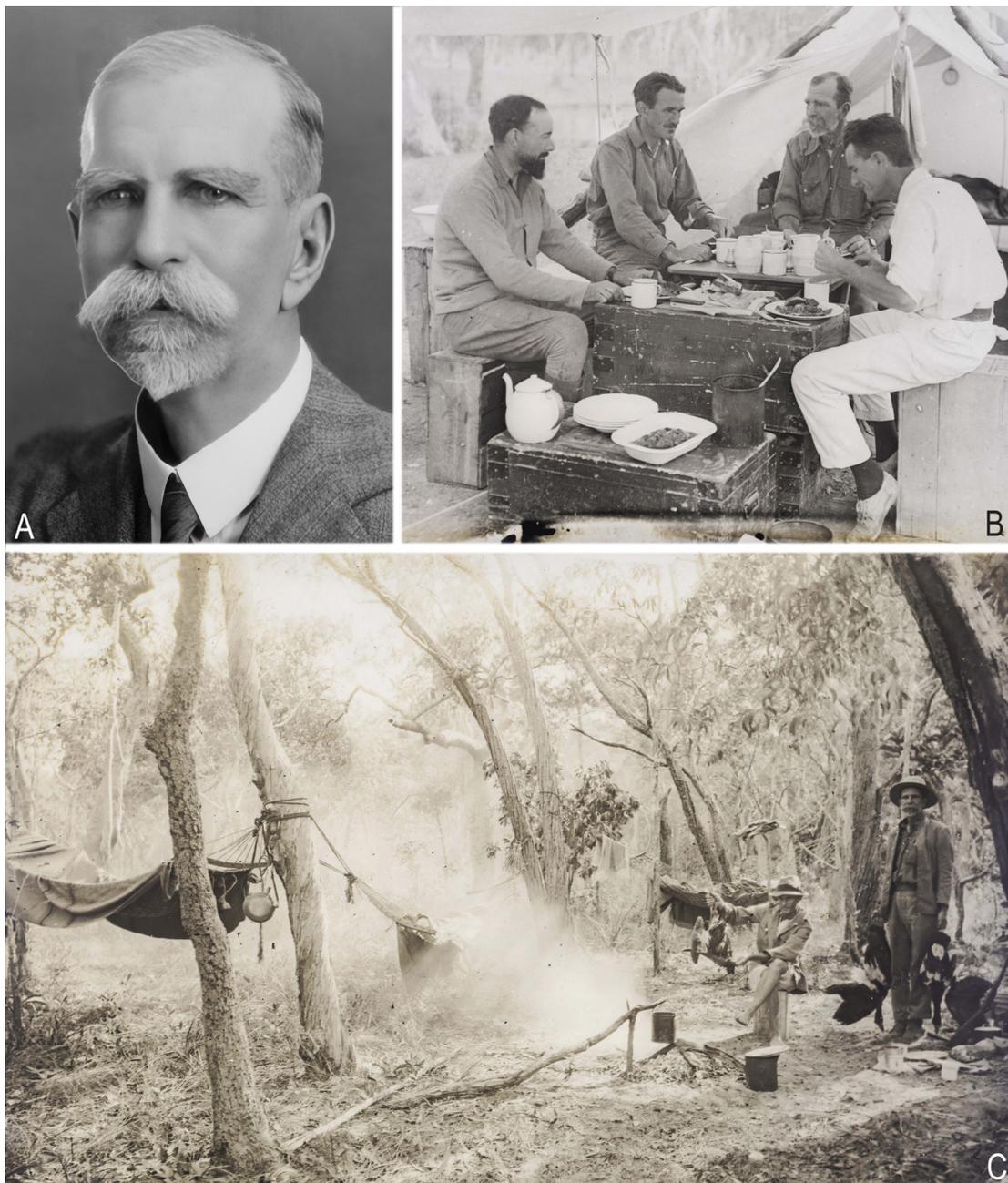


Figure 2. **A** J. Edgar Young portrait. Image courtesy: Oxley–Chelmer History Group Inc.; **B** Wilkins expedition personnel at breakfast: from left G.H. Wilkins, V. Kotoff, J.E. Young, O.G. Cornwell; **C** Camp beside the Macmillan (Olive) River, south of Shelburne Bay, Far North Queensland, J. Edgar Young on the right holding dead magpie geese. Images B and C courtesy: State Library of Queensland.

Longman wanted to add to the museum's collection 'especially in some directions where objects are liable to extinction from various causes', and where the museum's holdings were inadequate. Young obviously enjoyed the outdoor life and was no doubt keen to continue the type of work to which the Wilkins expedition had introduced him.

Longman readily accepted Young's proposal, noting to the Under-Secretary on 13 March 1924 that 'from my personal knowledge I can strongly recommend Mr. Young as a reliable man who will do good work for us in this way'. Longman organised permits from the Department of Agriculture and Stock for Young to collect 'mammals and birds in Queensland'. The permits excluded any collections of lyrebirds, along with parrots in the genus *Neophema* (grass parrots like the Turquoise Parrot), *Psephotus* (e.g. Paradise Parrot) and *Pezoporus* (e.g. Night Parrot), which were considered rare at the time. In addition, collections from Stradbroke Island of only 'red wallabies' were allowed, as Longman had previously held a permit to collect them but had been unable to do so. Tellingly, Longman noted that 'at present there is no permit in existence for any of our officers'. Indeed, Longman had only a handful of scientific staff able to undertake field work, so he was hampered by lack of personnel, and lack of permits in undertaking such work (Mather 1986).

Young seems to have been left to his own devices; little information exists on his field collecting trips. Some of his early tasks related to the continuing collections of Wilkins, who had moved on to the Northern Territory but still used the Queensland Museum as the base for his requirements and way-station for his boxes of specimens.

The Wilkins expedition, while well described in his official reports and published book, was not as successful as had been hoped. While over 5000 specimens were gathered, treated and sent off to London, they had difficulty finding the fauna they sought, due in part (according to Wilkins) to destruction of habitat by farming practices and the short-term approach to farming and national development (Wilkins 1928, pp. 38–40). Wilkins could not cover every part of the state, so Young was tasked with retrieving Stradbroke Island marsupial specimens.

QM registers for the period show that Young was a frequent collector and travelled widely throughout Queensland. He was busy collecting birds around Moreton Bay, Russell Island and Stradbroke Island from 1924–1926, while mammals and marsupials were also prime targets. He ranged further afield for more mammals to the Kingaroy district, Mundubbera, St George, Gayndah, Barakula, as well as north Queensland at Yarrabah, the Daintree River and Evelyn Scrub on the southern Atherton Tablelands.

Young also went to Hughenden in north-central Queensland, especially Mt Emu and Telemon Station, to collect birds, reptiles, mammals and fossils. At Low Isles on the Great Barrier Reef he collected echinoderms and various types of worms. He also collected First Nations artefacts for the museum, and many of these are registered from sites such as the Moreton Bay area, Fraser Island (now K'gari), Burleigh Heads, Beaudesert, Graceville and Hughenden.

Young's collecting was often done under difficult conditions. He travelled to remote locations in outback and tropical Queensland, at times by rail, car or truck, or by horse. The landscape was often drought-stricken and his health suffered. Collecting in those days usually involved tracking and shooting or netting specimens, skinning the animal and preparing the skin for preservation and transport, then arranging for packing and transport to Brisbane. Young was skilled in catching or killing and preparing the specimens, and attentively labelled his specimens for transit. This was all part of his role as 'honorary collector'; he was reimbursed for travel and field expenses but received no salary or honorarium.

The Low Isles expedition 1928–1929

In 1928–29 a team of scientists, led by Dr Charles Yonge (1899–1986) of Cambridge University, undertook extensive research on the Great Barrier Reef to understand more about its biology and geology. At that time, western scientific knowledge and understanding of the reef was limited (Bowen & Bowen 2002). Yonge's team was based on Low Isles off Port Douglas for 13 months and produced significant research outcomes (Great Barrier Reef

Committee 1931). The Great Barrier Reef Committee had been founded in 1922, under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland, to foster study of the reef and its fauna. Heber Longman was chair of the committee in 1928. Edgar Young was then President of the Queensland Naturalists Club and offered his services to the expedition as director of the work to build and set up the camp prior to the research team's arrival. Prefabricated buildings were designed, delivered and erected by Young and other workers (Bowen & Bowen 2002, p. 259). Yonge spoke highly of Young's efforts:

After the details of the requirements of the expedition had been received at Brisbane, the Committee there were so fortunate as to receive the offer of the services of Mr. J. E. Young, a prominent Queensland naturalist, as director of the constructional work. As a result of Mr. Young's great experience in camp life and of his energy and ability, the members of the expedition on their arrival at Low Isles found all the huts completed and all necessary furniture and stores provided. The expedition owes a great debt to Mr. Young. Scientific work was begun almost immediately after arrival, instead of being delayed for many weeks pending the completion of constructional work (Great Barrier Reef Committee 1931, p. 6).

Young gave his own lively and informed account of the natural history of the Low Isles in a Presidential Address to the Naturalists Club on 18 February 1929 (Young 1929). Young noted that 'The English members of the party under Dr. C. M. Yonge, who are to be complimented for their zeal under trying conditions...have set themselves a task of great magnitude' (p. 12).

Papua trip and shipwreck

Young also visited South East Papua (then an Australian territory under League of Nations mandate) in 1929 on a collecting trip. He was accompanying Clement Fox (1858–1940), an ex-inspector of Queensland schools undertaking an inspection of mission schools on behalf of the Papuan Government. Fox was known to Young and lived nearby in Brisbane. They visited Port Moresby and mission schools on the east coast (e.g. Wanigela and Cape Vogel), on Goodenough and Fergusson in

the D'Entrecasteaux Islands, and off the southern tip of Papua, Samarai and Suai Islands and Fife Bay. Young described the return voyage from Suai in a letter to Longman on 28 July 1929:

I don't know if you would have heard anything of our shipwreck. We were on the Govt launch "Nivani" about 45 ft. returning from Fife Bay. Left Suau [sic], after sheltering, at 1 a.m. Friday 19th inst. And at 3 a.m. during a heavy wind and rain squall and very dark ran suddenly onto a reef, before the course could be altered. Of course we were off the proper course. We got a great pounding until daylight and were constantly swept by waves. We then saw land about a mile away and after much trouble got the dinghy across to the side and launched, this was twice swamped but eventually 5 of us got away in it and landed on a rocky beach. I walked round to a native village a mile away. We then went to a small island and stayed in a palm built hut for two days, living mostly on sweet potatoes and yam. A launch then fetched us to Samarai as we had sent off a runner with word on Friday. The boys later managed to bring most of our goods ashore, partly ruined of course. There were our 2 selves and 12 natives on launch, all safely landed and only natives ashore. Launch totally wrecked.

I don't want such another experience.

Reports reached the Brisbane newspapers within a few weeks (Anon. 1929a, b).

Ever the collector, despite his ordeal, Young advised Longman that 'I got a spotted cus-cus however on the island of Dillena [sic] when wrecked. As it has been almost impossible to properly dry it properly, I am afraid parts are damaged.' It remains in the QM collection as J4967 'Dalena Is. Samarai', as do other specimens from Port Moresby and Fergusson Island.

The Queensland Museum purchased the cuscus, plus bats, a rat, a spider and a constricting snake from Young in 1929, since his visit to Papua was not part of his honorary collector role, but a private trip. Young's glass slide photographic collection at the State Library of Queensland includes extensive documentation of this trip (Young 1923–40).

The Carnarvon expeditions

In 1937 Young was appointed botanist (and representative of the Queensland Museum) for an expedition to the Carnarvon Ranges in central Queensland. The expedition was led by the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland and included Father Leo Hayes (1889–1967) from Crows Nest as ethnologist and geologist. The group of specialists spent two weeks exploring the area, often on horseback, in difficult circumstances given the state of the roads and the weather. Despite this, they identified significant Aboriginal sites, a wealth of flora and fauna, and assessed the potential for using oil shale from the area. Young also participated in further expeditions in 1938 and 1940, as did the State Government Botanist, Cyril Tenison White (1890–1950) (Follett 2007, O'Brien 1948, Waldron 1940).

The expedition was widely publicised by the Royal Geographical Society and gained significant attention, as the Carnarvon district was largely unknown and unexplored except by First Nations peoples, for whom the area holds great cultural significance. The film made of the 1937 expedition largely focused on the sites of rock art that were visited (Royal Geographical Society of Australasia Queensland 1937).

The Telemon Station ichthyosaur

In 1935, Longman alerted Young to a large fossil skull found at Telemon Station, situated to the west of Hughenden. Young had experience in the Hughenden area from the Wilkins expedition.

The Hughenden district was well-known for its fossils of 'sea creatures'. The first ichthyosaur fossils from North Queensland were collected in several locations in and around the Flinders River, from which Frederick McCoy named *Ichthyosaurus australis* in 1867 (McCoy 1867). Etheridge described *Ichthyosaurus marathonsensis* from a Marathon Station specimen in 1888 (Jack & Etheridge 1892). Further donations to the Queensland Museum are recorded in 1914 from Sylvania Station and Galah Creek near Hughenden. A skull specimen from the latter presented by Messrs Dunn and Elliott was used by Longman in 1922 to give a fuller description of *I. australis*, and to

synonymise *I. marathonsensis* (Longman 1922b). *Ichthyosaurus australis* was later renamed *Platypterygius australis* (Wade 1984).

Ichthyosaur finds continued to be made in the area, but *Kronosaurus* fossils were also described in 1924 from a specimen donated in 1899 (Longman 1924). Such was the interest in these fossils that Longman visited Hughenden with his wife Irene (1877–1963) in September 1925 (Anon. 1925). The QM fossil register mentions Longman collected plesiosaur fragments, ammonite, plant remains and belemnites, the last of these 'At the 12 mile, Galah Creek', with a note 'The Ichthyosaur skull was found here'. Clearly Longman was determined to see the location of the skull that he had studied in 1922 (Queensland Museum Fossil Register No. 1, 046).

Fossil finds to this date had been isolated from across the Hughenden district and, apart from the Galah Creek skull, were not significant in terms of diagnostics. An ichthyosaur paddle was donated from Richmond Downs Station in early 1927, along with additional vertebrae from Marathon Station and other locations. Longman said 'We are always hopeful that more complete specimens will be found. At present they have been fragmentary' (Anon. 1927). His note on the donor schedule for that last donation was more pointed: 'Remains of Ichthyosaurians are very fragmentary from our Cretaceous deposits and every specimen may be of interest. There were at least two species of these huge marine reptiles in our Cretaceous seas' (Queensland Museum Donor Schedule 28 May 1927).

Edgar Young was therefore keen to follow up Longman's report of the Telemon Station skull. Longman was alerted in October 1934 by a letter from Mr M. McCulloch, Manager of Marathon Station, advising of a fossil find on the neighbouring property to the north, Telemon Station (Queensland Museum 1924–1938). McCulloch wrote again in March the following year offering to forward the fossils to the Museum, but Young was tasked to investigate and collect. He arrived there at the end of March. When his train stopped at Torrens Creek on the way to Hughenden, he took the opportunity to meet up with members of the Hore family who had assisted himself and Wilkins on their visit there in 1923 (Wilkins 1928, pp. 78–83).

Another of Young's tasks was to collect marsupials such as hare wallabies, rock wallabies and kangaroos, in addition to dingoes and bustards. He was told by the Hores that animals were generally scarce and hare wallabies had not been seen for a long time. In the end Young collected wallaroos, rock wallabies, red kangaroos (plus joeys of all) and bustards, many of these from Emu Plains some 80 km to the north of Hughenden, where he spent two weeks. He also found some ethnological specimens (grindstones), which remain in the museum collection as QE3208 and QE3209.

Young's primary objective, however, was fossils, and on 25 April he left Hughenden for Telemon Station, via Marathon Station. He met with McCulloch and began the fossil recovery work. He stayed at Telemon for five weeks, and in that time collected several different sets of remains, the initial one being a *Kronosaurus* skull only 400 m from the Telemon homestead (Fig. 3). While he found the locality to be 'very fossiliferous', the extreme drought meant that he was able to get little help from the station

hands who were otherwise busy, the 'cracked and crumbling soil' made walking very difficult and not all remains could be collected. As a result, he had to leave some fossils behind (Queensland Museum 1924–1938, letter 4 June 1935).

Despite difficulties posed by the drought and its impact on the operations of Telemon Station, Young made a further important find of *Ichthyosaurus australis*, in a 'paddock on hill towards Woolshed in shaly ground', about one and a half kilometres east of the homestead. This proved to be the most complete ever collected in Australia, as Young recalled:

Some 8 or 10 inches of vertebrae were noticed just visible above the ground. These were dug around carefully, and the greater part of the remains of an *Ichthyosaurus australis* was uncovered... It proved to be 18 feet in length, of which the head comprised almost one-third. One paddle was present, with a number of the fossil bony plates, which are the foundation of the finger portion (Young 1937).



Figure 3. In situ image of *Kronosaurus queenslandicus* fossil skull, Telemon Station, 1935. Lateral view showing teeth. Courtesy: State Library of Queensland.

In a letter to Longman on 12 May, Young further described his find:

I also found—personally – an Ichthyosaurus last Monday. The head eluded me at first, being well underground and I did not at first recognise it. The head is in 3 pieces [actually 4 pieces] and the teeth are not very readily seen. The eye is also not so clear...but I think you will be pleased with it all. The vertebrae are almost complete in number and many small ribs showing. Also one flipper or hand as it appears to have been covered with a double thickness of oblong bony plates, possibly 2 surfaces. Most of these are or were in situ. I will do the best I can to keep these so. There are also one or two embedded in the back. The other arm is missing. The head is 5 ft in length and total 17 ft. possibly a little over.

Several of Young's photographs of the location and excavation of the finds at Telemon (Fig. 4) are included in the Young photographic collection at the State Library of Queensland (Young 1923–40).

Young's collected fossils and the skins from mammals he had shot for the museum were packed and stored at Marathon and comprised '14 cases and 4 bundles fossils, and 2 of skins, the latter comprising 1 fairly large male Red K'roo'. The museum was able to have them delivered with the benefit of a 50% discount on freight from the Commissioner of Railways (Queensland Museum 1924–1938, 1935 correspondence).

The items were received by Longman who was expansive in his praise of the specimens, and in his thanks to McCulloch at Marathon Station and to Young himself. Longman described them as 'some of the most interesting specimens ever sent to this museum...some of the most valuable and significant specimens ever received from our Cretaceous deposits'. Media interest was strong, and Longman was quoted as being 'pleased that a Queenslander had made the collection, and that it had not been sent out of the country' (Anon. 1935a). This referenced the 1933 removal by a Harvard University team of the first articulated skeleton of *Kronosaurus*, found near Richmond (Mather 1986, pp. 140–141).

Yet there was more fossil material at Telemon.

Young indicated to Longman on 4 June 1935 that he had heard of fossils at Mona Vale Station close by, considered that there was probably another ichthyosaur in the bore drain where they had found other material and, more significantly,

I found a second Ichthyosaurus on same old ridge with portion of vertebrae in matrix (solid). The rest was in one large block very heavy & not at all inviting looking so I dropped what was moveable back and covered all up. It can be opened again if required.

After Young's return from Hughenden, newspaper reports quoting Longman described the Telemon finds in glowing terms, including the fossils 'too massive for him to handle' that Young had not collected. The fossils were also being prepared for display by Young, who it was said had several months work ahead of him (Anon. 1935a). Young (1937) himself described his expedition in the popular journal *Walkabout*, emphasising the difficulty of the task: 'In Australia there is little in the nature of adventure or romance in this kind of hunting; but, on the other hand, there is much in the way of discomfort and even hardship to be endured' (p. 48). The size of the ancient marine creatures continued to fascinate the newspapers and their readers, and Longman was ready to emphasise these aspects to his department superiors as well as the journalists (Anon. 1935b, Anon. 1936).

Longman used this find to write further on the Australian ichthyosaurs (Longman 1943), notably regarding the eye structures (Cook & Rozefelds 2024, pp. 186–187), and commended Young on his 'careful and persistent work' in extracting the fossil from its mudstone matrix. Young even provided an illustration of the sclerotic eye plates for Longman's 1943 paper (p. 102). In a letter on 22 September 1936, Longman acknowledged Young's work preparing the Telemon fossils: 'We much appreciate the good work you are doing in the Queensland Museum in making more presentable the valuable fossils recently collected by you'. This work may not have been completed, as Mather refers in 1986 to the ichthyosaur as 'languishing on display in a half-prepared state since 1935'. It was then fully prepared under the guidance of Museum palaeontologist Mary Wade (Mather 1986, p. 144; Wade 1984, p. 103).

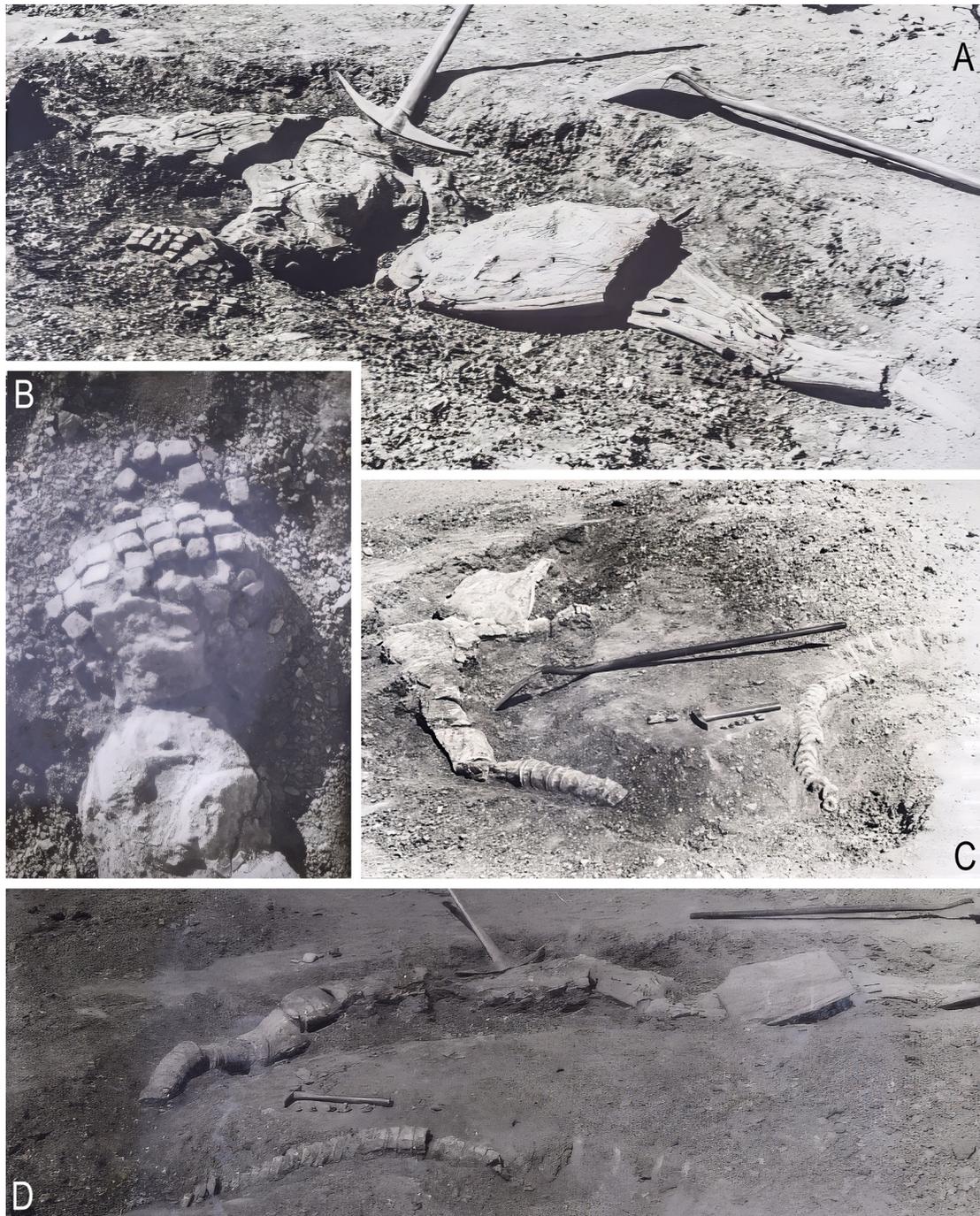


Figure 4. In situ images of *Platypterygius australis* fossil at Telemon Station, 1935, taken from different angles during excavation. Tools indicate the size of the fossil. **A** and **B** phalanges of the right fin-blade. **A** and **D** three skull pieces on right-hand side of images. **C** and **D** tail pieces. Courtesy: State Library of Queensland.

From an historical perspective, the find, excavation and partial preparation by Young proved to be of great significance. It was a major palaeontological find and it enabled photographs of the original fossil material to be taken in situ, informing future research on the genus. The fossil continues to support ongoing study (e.g. Kear 2003, Kear 2005, Zammit 2010), and is displayed publicly at the Queensland Museum.

More collecting

Young did not stop there, setting off again in April 1936 for a collecting trip to Roma, Muckadilla and Chinchilla. Part of his objective was to revisit Durham Downs near Roma, where the dinosaur *Rhoetosaurus brownei* had been unearthed a decade earlier (Longman 1926). He was able to find several pieces, including ribs embedded in clay, and some larger pieces of stone with ‘traces of vertebrae & ribs’, but not enough to warrant collection. He concluded that ‘the only possibility ... would be by turning over the site to a depth of 2 feet. We sampled it to some extent without result (except ribs) and the whole job would require labour and possibly several days of work, and I greatly doubt if the head would be found’. In a further report he added that ‘intensive work by labourers for 3 or 4 days, might result in further finds but it would be very doubtful...’ (Queensland Museum 1924–1938, 1936 correspondence).

At Muckadilla he collected *Diprotodon* pieces from several residents who had taken them from a discovery at nearby Mt Abundance. Young also visited the Chinchilla Rifle Range deposit, found marsupial and chelonian fragments, passed specimens held by the local Catholic priest on to Longman, and reported the site as ‘undoubtedly very fossiliferous, but the stuff might take some finding’.

It appears as if this might have been the final fossil collecting trip for Young. The QM fossil register doesn’t record him collecting any more specimens, and Young reported to Longman that he was experiencing his heart trouble again, ‘and the Dr says it is worse than before I went out west’.

Nevertheless, Young still travelled and assisted the museum. In late 1937, Longman asked Young to act

as a guide and source of local knowledge for several months for a German collector, Gabriele Neuhauser (1911–1998), who was collecting mammals in North Queensland on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History. This work continued into 1938, and Young was able to collect some bird and tree kangaroo specimens while at Evelyn Scrub on the Atherton Tableland. The official history of the museum states that Neuhauser’s ‘specimens were the only significant additions to the museum’s vertebrate collections between 1893 and 1946’, thereby effectively dismissing Young’s efforts in contributing to the museum’s fauna collections (Mather 1986, pp. 163–167).

Beyond this date, however, Young’s collecting certainly slows. He made collections of birds and mammals in 1936 and 1937 from Durham Downs, Chinchilla and the Atherton Tableland, and from his trips to Carnarvon Gorge with the Royal Geographical Society around 1940. He and his wife were reported as spending seven weeks motoring around North Queensland, including Cairns, the Atherton Tableland and Innisfail, where Mrs Young opened the new town hall; the Johnstone River, where Innisfail is located, was named after her father (Anon. 1874, Anon. 1938).

Young was also a frequent collector of ethnographic material, mainly stone tools of various kinds. He provided many items to the museum over the years from areas that he visited, but in particular from the ‘Upper Albert River’, where his son-in-law’s family, the Stephens, had (and still have) farming property in the Darlington area. Young and his wife visited there frequently, even leading a Queensland Naturalists Club excursion in 1939. Young’s main donation of ethnographic items to the museum was in July 1949, not only from the Upper Albert River, but also from Carnarvon National Park (Moolayember).

Young's botanical collections

Edgar Young was also a keen botanist and plant collector, and the Australasian Virtual Herbarium lists 105 specimens recorded and donated by Young, or by Young and C.T. White (Australasian Virtual Herbarium). These are held in the National Herbarium of Victoria, the National Herbarium of NSW and the Australian National Herbarium, with the bulk in the Queensland Herbarium; they were

collected over the period stretching from 1914 to 1938 from all over Queensland. Many collections occurred during his time with the Wilkins expedition (Figs. 5, 6 and 7), but his subsequent travels with the museum across the state brought forward many more specimens. Just as his fossil collecting did not distract him from searching for mammals and birds, likewise plants did not escape his attention. In addition to the new North Queensland species *Xanthostemon youngii* and *Grevillea sessilis*, he had earlier discovered *Cryptandra armata* C.T. White & W.D. Francis 1922 from Barakula, north of Chinchilla, possibly around 1920 (White & Francis 1922).

Interestingly, there exists some confusion in the botanical literature between 'J. E. Young' as a collector and 'Jess Young', a botanical collector for the pathfinding expeditions by Ernest Giles to Central and South Australia in the 1870s. The *Flora of Australia* entry for *Grevillea sessilis* (Vol. 17A, 2000), which Edgar Young collected in 1923 at Torrens Creek near Hughenden, gives the collector as 'J. E. Young', but the date was incorrectly recorded as 'probably 1870s', instead of 1923. The Wikipedia entry for the same plant is also in error, as it names the collector as 'Jess Young'. The latter did collect prolifically on the extensive Giles expeditions, but collections from Queensland by 'J. E. Young' are definitely by James Edgar Young.

Final years

Young remained an active member of the Queensland Naturalists Club until 1949, a tenure of 35 years. For that last 15 years of his membership, he continued to attend meetings regularly, was again elected President in 1936 and served as Excursions Secretary for some time. He frequently addressed meetings and wrote thirteen articles for the club's journal between 1921 and 1949, his final contribution being in November 1949 on birds (seemingly his favourite topic) (Young 1949). C.T. White (the former Government Botanist) and Heber Longman also continued as active members over that period but died in 1950 and 1954, respectively. Interestingly, Young's son, Harold Edwin Young (1907–1970), a government plant pathologist and weed specialist, also spent time as President of the Club in 1940, but subsequently joined the Army for the duration of the war, returning later to his scientific career.



Figure 5. Holotype of *Xanthostemon youngii* C.T. White & W.D. Francis, Queensland Herbarium. Courtesy: Queensland Herbarium (BRI) [BRI-AQ0316316].

Edgar Young's ongoing heart problems contributed to his death on 28 June 1956 in the Brisbane Mental Hospital at Goodna, aged 84. The cause of death listed on his death certificate was congestive cardiac failure and senile cardiovascular degeneration. Given where he died, however, he had clearly suffered from dementia in his later years. He is buried at

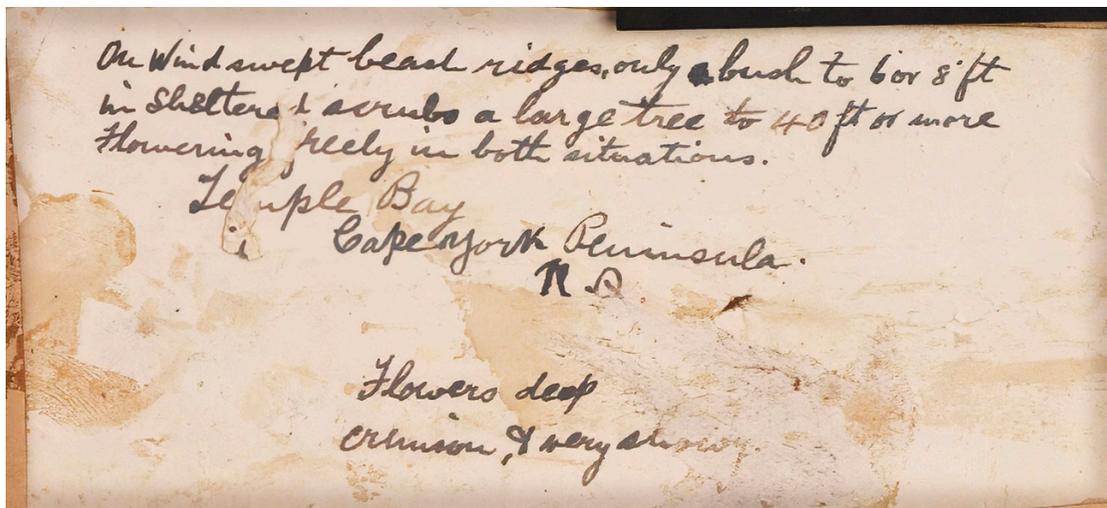


Figure 6. Detail of holotype image of *Xanthostemon youngii* C.T. White & W.D. Francis. Handwritten field note by the collector, J. Edgar Young. Last line (partly obscured) reads ‘Flowers deep crimson, & very showy’. Courtesy: Queensland Herbarium (BRI) [BRI-AQ0316316].

Toowong Cemetery with his parents, sister and wife. Sadly, Ruby outlived Edgar by only a week, dying on 6 July 1956 of bronchopneumonia and carcinomatosis.

DISCUSSION

How do we assess the contributions of an ‘honorary collector’ such as Young? He was not a trained scientist, but nor was Longman. Young was clearly highly skilled in bushcraft and natural history with substantial practical experience. He understood and valued the importance of institutions like the Queensland Museum and the Herbarium. He dedicated much of his life to furthering the cause of natural history, contributing to the underlying science. Though it involved shooting birds and mammals for museum collection purposes, this was a normal practice at that time. Queensland Museum records indicate that, in addition to his fossil collections, he contributed 171 fauna specimens (including 103 mammals) and 14 sets of ethnological items.

Young undoubtedly led a busy and active life, though an unsettled and restless one. He moved from architecture to farming, and his death certificate still listed him as a grazier. His reputation and skills gave him opportunities such as the Wilkins and Great

Barrier Reef expeditions, but he also gave widely of himself and his time to many organisations and causes, such as the Presbyterian Church, the Boy Scouts, the Queensland Naturalists Club and the National Parks Association.

His collecting work for the museum frequently took him on trips across most of Queensland which, at least from his correspondence with Longman, he enjoyed. He seemed not to let the difficulties of the task or the conditions upset him, and flexibly dealt with the unexpected. His capacity as an organised expeditioner gave him the ability to work with others or be self-sufficient. Most of his museum collecting trips appear to have been undertaken alone, rather than in parties.

Young certainly fulfilled the ‘ideal of a field naturalist’ — a many-sided inquirer into nature (Colledge 1911) or, as F. Stan Colliver (1953) described it, an educator, a recorder and a student of all aspects of nature. Young was not a specialist (although he was very knowledgeable about fauna and flora) but someone who was alert to all that was around him as he travelled the back roads of Queensland. He was as capable of excavating and then partially preparing the Telemon ichthyosaur as he was of shooting and skinning red kangaroos, rock wallabies and the elusive bustard on the same journey.

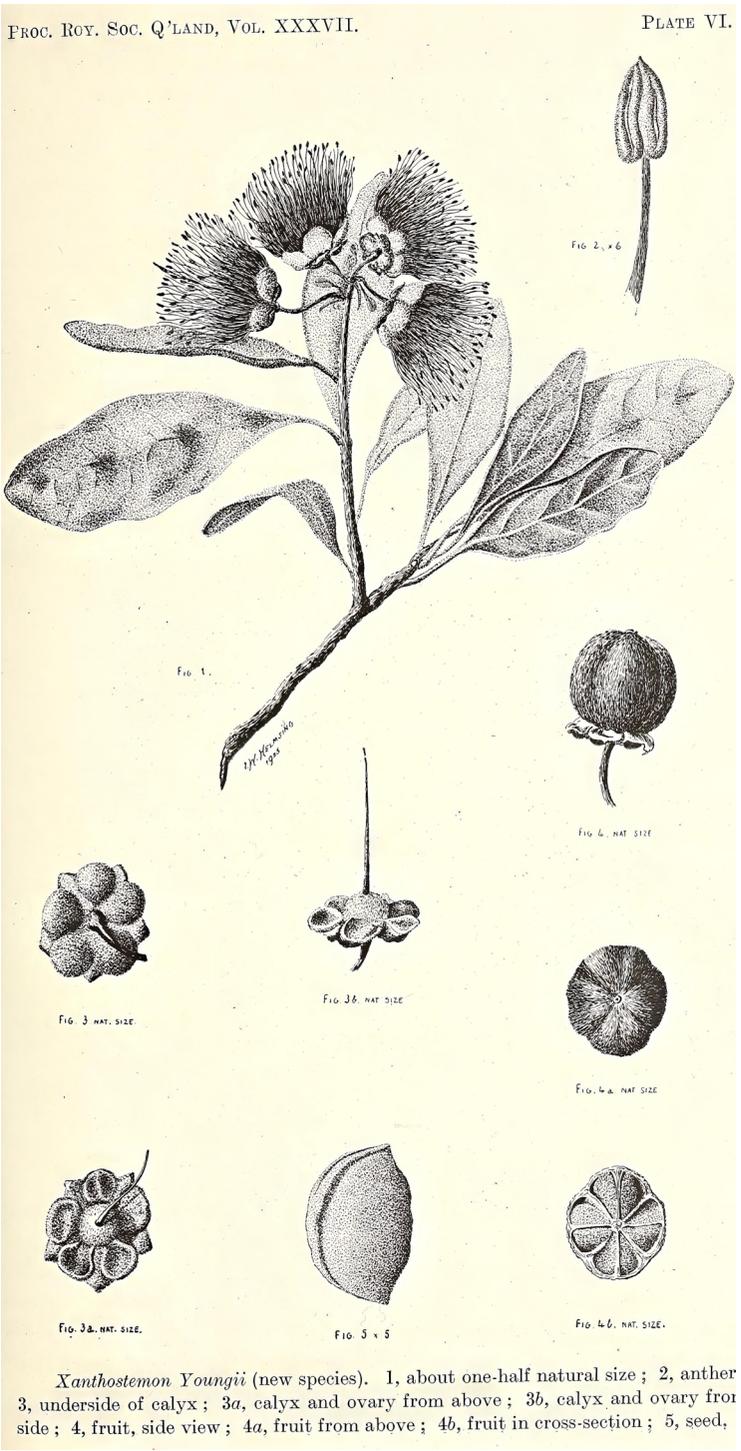


Figure 7. Original illustration of *Xanthostemon youngii* C.T. White & W.D. Francis. Image from White and Francis (1926), courtesy: Biodiversity Heritage Library. Contributed by Smithsonian Libraries and Archives, Creative Commons License BY-NC-3.0.

In the 1920s to 1940s, did Young's work advance the science of the day, as we might today assess a citizen scientist? He undoubtedly furthered palaeontological science of the day by uncovering and then preparing for study the Telemon Station ichthyosaur, as it enabled Longman to do additional descriptive work on the fossils. Young's find still reverberates today, as the *Platypterygius* fossil is on public display at the Queensland Museum and research on this genus continues. His mammal and bird collections, on the other hand, enabled Longman to fill gaps in the Museum's collection and add specimens from new locations, but these do not appear overall to have made a scientifically significant contribution. His ethnological collecting was invasive and culturally inappropriate when viewed through today's lens, but at the time it was common practice to gather up this type of material rather than to study it in situ. His plant collecting added new species and new locations, but it was not systematic in any sense. But then, the role of the field naturalist was never principally a systematic one.

At the same time, Young filled an important personnel function for the museum. Over this interwar period, the museum had less than a dozen staff, and Young's honorary collector role enabled fieldwork to be done and collections to be made that would otherwise have been impossible. Community support was reinforced for the museum by the work of several honorary entomologists, a conchologist and specialist advice from the University of Queensland when required (Mather 1986, pp. 57–59).

J. Edgar Young can therefore perhaps be seen as an Australian style of 'gentleman' collector of the first half of the 20th century: an enthusiastic and skilled naturalist of private means, a horseman and accomplished rifleman, who did not employ others to collect for him, but who did the hard work himself and helped others in their scientific work. He engaged directly with Australian nature, its variety and complexity, and seemed determined to understand more and teach others about what he saw and experienced in the bush. He was at the frontline of exploring Queensland's biodiversity for three decades.

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