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Gray's (1845) *Heteronota kendallii* and the Mysterious Mr. Kendall

Commonly known as Kendall's Rock Gecko, the gekkonid *Heteronota kendallii* (current name: *Cnemaspis kendallii*; Fig. 1) appears in the *Catalogue of the Specimens of Lizards in the Collection of the British Museum*, authored by John Edward Gray (1800–1875), and published in 1845. No information is given about the namesake, and the collector/donor is specified as “Capt. Sir Edw. Belcher, C.B., R.N.” (full name Edward Belcher, 1799–1877). Belcher is famously associated with the command of H.M.S. *Samarang*, one of the earliest British ships to reach Borneo (Fig. 2), with his collections arriving at the British Museum (BMNH) for study in 1842 (Anonymous 1906). Gray (1845) based his name for this gecko on two syntypes: a male and a female from “Borneo”; the type locality was later assumed to be Sarawak by Smith (1925), presumably following the ship's travel logs. Dring (1979) reidentified one of the syntypes as *Cnemaspis nigridia* (Smith 1925) and restricted the name *kendallii* to BMNH XXII.92a, as the lectotype of *Heteronota kendallii*. Currently, *Cnemaspis kendallii* is known from numerous isolated lowland localities in north-western Borneo, and essentially, western Sarawak (Nashriq and Das 2021).

The *Samarang* was a 28-gun ship of the Royal Navy, launched at Cochin, India, in 1822 by the East India Company, and saw naval action in the First Opium War, and was thereafter employed in the survey of the coasts of the Far East and southern China from 1843–1846 (Rice 1986). An account of the latter voyage is in Belcher (1848), which was carried out under the Office of the Admiralty and Marine Affairs. Assistant Surgeon and zoologist on board the *Samarang*, Arthur Adams (1820–1878), edited the zoology account stemming from the voyage (Gray et al. 1850), preparing numerous line and art pieces that were used by Belcher to illustrate the account of the voyage (see Low et al. 2020). Adams added his natural history observations to Belcher's (1848) work, which includes anecdotal passages pertaining to the

herpetofauna encountered during the voyage. While in Sarawak, collections were made by the crew, as well as the indigenous Dayaks and some specimens were donated by Sir James Brooke (1803–1868), the Rajah of Sarawak, who often acted as a gracious host to European visitors. Significantly, the ship struck a rock off the Santubong coast of Sarawak and capsized and was refloated about a month later.

The voyage of H.M.S. *Samarang* produced other zoological material that were accessioned with the British Museum (currently, The Natural History Museum, London), and listed in more recent works (e.g., Musters 1983), with Belcher identified as the collector/donor. The reptiles collected (including *Draco cornutus*, *D. lineatus*, *D. spilopterus*, and *D. cf. sumatranus*) as mentioned in the aforementioned work, are mostly lowland species as may be expected from areas along the Sarawak coast including the lowlands of western part of the state. These were inexplicably not included in the official account of the zoological collections made by the *Samarang* (as enumerated in Gray et al. [1850]), the vertebrate part of the volume concentrating on mammals and birds, though it oddly list a single reptile: *Pelamis maculata* (currently, *Hydrophis platyurus*).

The name *Heteronota kendallii* occurs three times in Gray (1845): in the formal description (p. 174), in the index of scientific names (p. xii), and in the index of scientific names (p. 283). Since the time of an early revision of the genus (Das and Bauer 1998),

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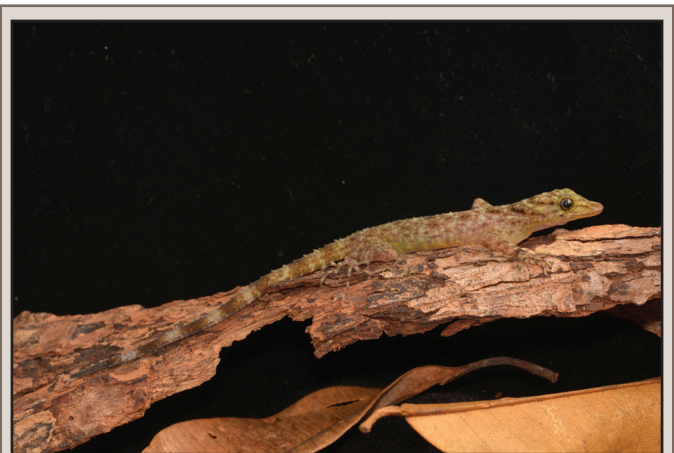


FIG. 1. A live individual of Kendall's Rock Gecko (*Cnemaspis kendallii*) from Gunung Gading National Park, Sarawak, Malaysia.



FIG. 2. Commemorative postage stamp set issued by Cocos Keeling, a territory of Australia in the Indian Ocean in 1990, on the theme of navigators. The \$1 value perforated stamp as well as imperforate sheetlet show Captain Edward Belcher and H.M.S. *Samarang* (Stanley Gibbons catalog number 225; Anon 2024).

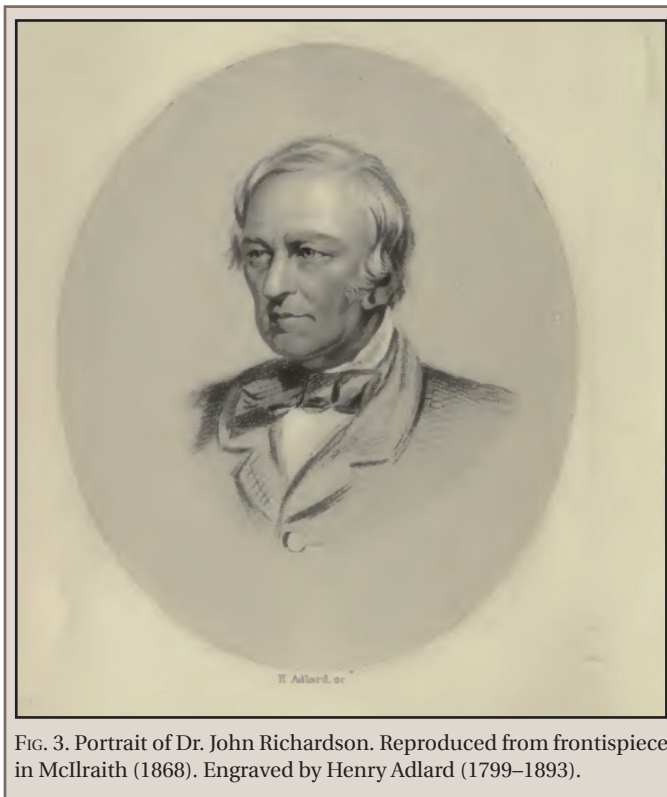


FIG. 3. Portrait of Dr. John Richardson. Reproduced from frontispiece in McIlraith (1868). Engraved by Henry Adlard (1799–1893).

the namesake of the species has been a source of mystery (see also Beolens et al. 2011). In the two extensive lists of donors (see pp. v–ix and 275–277), Gray (1845) does not mention Kendall, and the name cannot be found in the museum archives (e.g., Anonymous 1906; Thackray 1998). However, the list does include a Dr. John Richardson (1787–1865; Fig. 3), who contributed material from the New World, west Asia, and Australasia, and was active in the British Museum at the time of Gray. The gekkonid, *Velvernesia richardsonii* (currently, *Hemidactylus richardsonii*), sphaerodactylid *Sphaerodactylus richardsonii*, and scincid *Hinulia richardsonii* (currently, *Eremiascincus richardsonii*) were, in fact, named in honor of Richardson in the said work.

Just how important was Richardson? A biography published by Reverend McIlraith (1868) recognizes Richardson's contributions

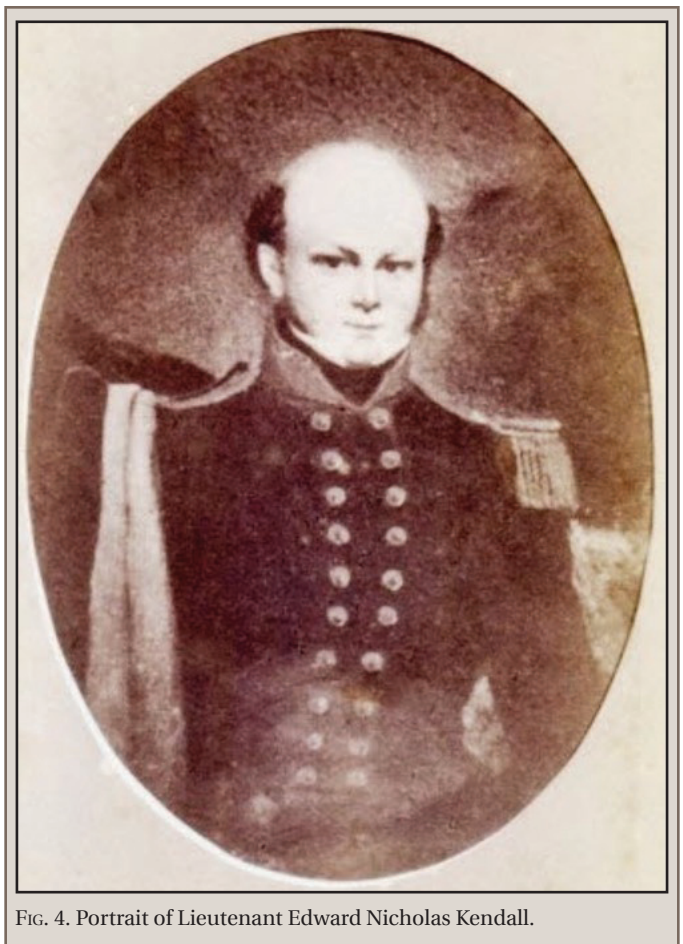


FIG. 4. Portrait of Lieutenant Edward Nicholas Kendall.

as a naturalist aboard several expeditionary vessels as a physician-naturalist, which was commonly demanded for such tasks, in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Richardson's contributions include works in ichthyology (Richardson 1843) and geography (Richardson 1861), as well as one posthumously published travelogue (Richardson 1984). A complete list of publications is in Curvey and Johnson (1969). It would seem that the association between Richardson and Gray was long and significant, apart from the new lizard names and at least one snake name (*Myron richardsonii*), Gray wrote the foreword to Kaup's (1856) catalog of eels and eel-like fishes in European museums, that was translated from the original German and prepared for press by Richardson as an official museum catalog.

Richardson's biography and other works prominently mention Lieutenant Edward Nicholas Kendall (1800–1845; Fig. 4), a semi-heroic officer with the Royal Navy, in addition to being a hydrographer and polar explorer of repute, who died the same year (1845) *H. kendallii* was described. Kendall and Richardson were part of the expedition to the Mackenzie River Delta in Canada, and in McIlraith's (1868) work, Kendall's name is mentioned as many as 14 times. Towards the end of the expedition, Richardson wrote with what appears to be more than a twinge of sorrow: "Neither men nor officers made their fortunes; and, what I most regretted, my friend and companion, Lieutenant Kendall, remained in that rank till the day of his death, notwithstanding his subsequent important scientific services".

A brief biography of Kendall is presented here, for the apparent lack of dedicated published works, derived primarily from Dawson (1830), O'Byrne (1849), and Holland (2021). Edward

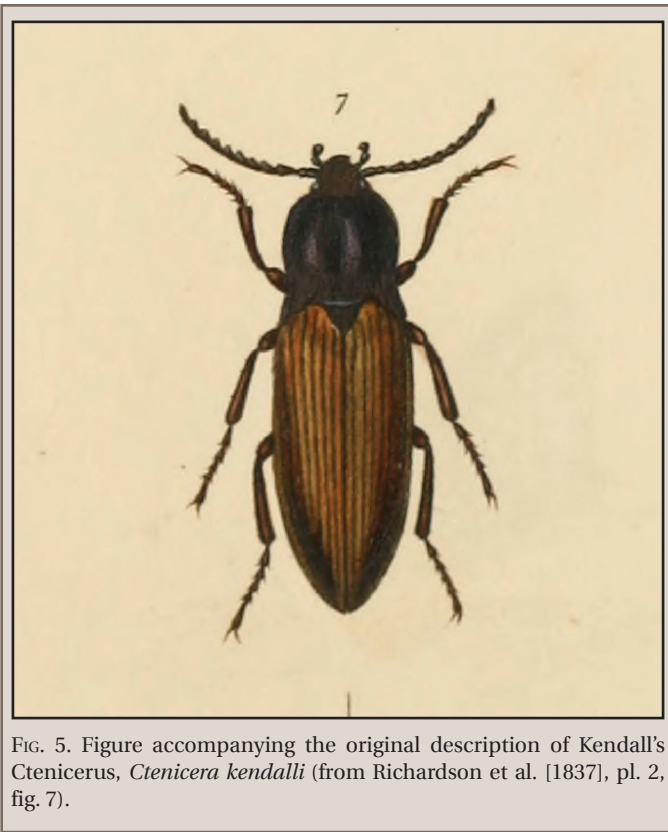


FIG. 5. Figure accompanying the original description of Kendall's Ctenicerus, *Ctenicera kendalli* (from Richardson et al. [1837], pl. 2, fig. 7).

Nicholas Kendall (1800–1845) was assumed to have been born in England, probably at Cornwall. The family name itself is from Kendal in Cumbria, recorded in 1095 as Kircabikendala, ‘village with a church in the valley of the Kent river’, and apparently from an Anglicized form of the Welsh personal name Cynddelw. He joined the Royal Navy in 1814 and was appointed Lieutenant in 1827. He died on 12 February 1845, at Southampton. Kendall served in several expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic, including to the Polar Sea under the celebrated British naval officer and explorer, Sir John Franklin (1786–1847) in 1825–1827. At the aforementioned voyage, he was the companion of Dr. John Richardson, when they delineated the north coast of America, between the Mackenzie and Coppermine rivers.

During the Overland Expeditions to the Polar Sea, 1819–1822 and 1825–1827, Kendall collected zoological material and Richardson et al. (1829–1837) acknowledged Kendall's assistance with collecting specimens such as the raven that Kendall shot and was found to have been carrying the lock of a chest that it had stolen. In the same work, William Kirby (1759–1850) recognized Kendall's contributions by naming a click beetle Kendall's Ctenicerus, a species that is valid as *Ctenicera kendalli* (Fig. 5).

At the time of his death, at the age of 45, Kendall was Superintendent of the Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, then operator of mail, passenger, and cargo services between Europe, Egypt, India, the Far East, and Australia. Kendall prepared several technical reports, on the topics of velocity of sound at different temperatures, descriptions of the island of Deception and the province of New Brunswick, and on steam communication between England and Australasia.

The association of Kendall, who was not known to have visited Borneo, with Gray who was Superintendent Zoologist of the British Museum as well as the *Samarang* material, therefore

needs further comment. We hypothesize that Richardson convinced Gray to name the Bornean lizard after his former assistant during his explorations of boreal America, particularly on account of both his presumed disappointment at Kendall's misfortune not to be appropriately recognized for his scientific contributions and his untimely death at the time Gray's lizard catalogue was going to press.

This note provides an argument that the eponym of the Bornean gecko *Cnemaspis kendallii* was the explorer and hydrographer, Edward Nicholas Kendall (1800–1845). Kendall was an assistant to John Richardson (1787–1865), naturalist, and physician in the expedition to the Mackenzie River Delta in Canada, between 1825 to 1827, and died prematurely. While Richardson served as the namesake for a variety of squamates that were described by John Gray at the British Museum, it is plausible that the former requested the name of Kendall be honored through the naming of a new species.

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