

# NOTORNIS

## Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. Election of Fellows

The Constitution of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. allows for the election of Fellows of the Society (FOSNZ) in recognition of distinguished service to the Society or ornithology, particularly in New Zealand. It further provides that there will be no more than four Fellows living at any one time. Accordingly, election as a Fellow represents the highest honour that the Society can bestow.

The Council of the Society resolved in 1998, following the death of Professor Brian Marples, to elect two new Fellows. Both have had distinguished ornithological careers.

It gives me great pleasure to present their achievements and to acknowledge the assistance of Peter Bull, Chris Challies and Kerry-Jane Wilson in preparing these résumés of their careers.

CJR Robertson  
President



### **Brian Douglas Bell**

As a boy growing up in Christchurch, Brian became interested in nature with regular holidays on a farm. Initially, he had to search very hard to find the fledgling OSNZ, but after joining in 1947 he moved to a farm in Marlborough where land birds were his first interest. His first AGM was in Wellington, when the field trips were in the Wairarapa - including a beach patrol at Lake Ferry. This introduced him to a range of members who have themselves been prominent in the affairs and studies of the Society - Bull, Turbott, Oliver, Cunningham, Stidolph, Crockett and Medway to mention a few.

His subsequent history of service within the Society has been as Regional Organiser in Marlborough and Wellington, Councillor (1962-1971), Vice-President (1971-75) and President (1975-1980 and 1989-1995). Apart from the administration of the

Society's affairs, Brian has made an especially valuable contribution through his efforts to train non-professional members of the Society (and especially junior members) in the techniques required for the effective field study of birds. This has included organising successful field study courses (e.g. Farewell Spit and Ward) and by involving people in demanding but exciting projects, such as the attempts to establish a breeding colony of *Puffinus gavia* on Maud Island by translocation of young. Combined with a regular appearance at meetings and field trips he has been an enthusiastic contributor to the enjoyment of bird study in New Zealand.

It is significant that for a person who has spent much of his life working at his hobby, that a major part of his substantial and supportive family have a continuing interest in bird study.

Brian has a significant publication record both in his own right and with co-authors, covering a wide range of often rare and isolated bird species. Even more significantly he has been a great provider of information to others, as is recorded regularly among the acknowledgments in papers by other ornithologists. This broad knowledge and expertise has enabled him to make important contributions to the *Checklist* and Rare Birds Committees of the Society, and as an advisor to the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*.

Most of these activities for the Society were undertaken while he held the very demanding position as senior field superintendent in the former NZ Wildlife Service. Though coming from a practical rather than academic background of farming, fencing, shearing, weed control, soil conservation/erosion control, construction and painting, from 1957 to 1987 he was in charge of national fauna protection, and responsible for the planning, budgeting and directing of those programmes. His practical background, combined with a broad natural interest, enabled the development of internationally significant and innovative methods. A significant part of these programmes evolved from an active investigation of what wildlife we had and where it was located. Brian's itinerary in the 1960s and 1970s looks more like a deliberate case of going where there weren't any roads, combined with an attempt to visit most islands in the New Zealand region.

A pivotal event in his life was the invasion of Big South Cape Island by rats in 1964 - an ecological disaster which showed that we did not then have the knowledge, or the skills, to solve such a problem. A species extinction made him realise even more vividly, the great danger of having 'all the eggs in one basket'. While there was already an understanding of the need for species transfers, this event gave impetus to the development of new techniques and methods.

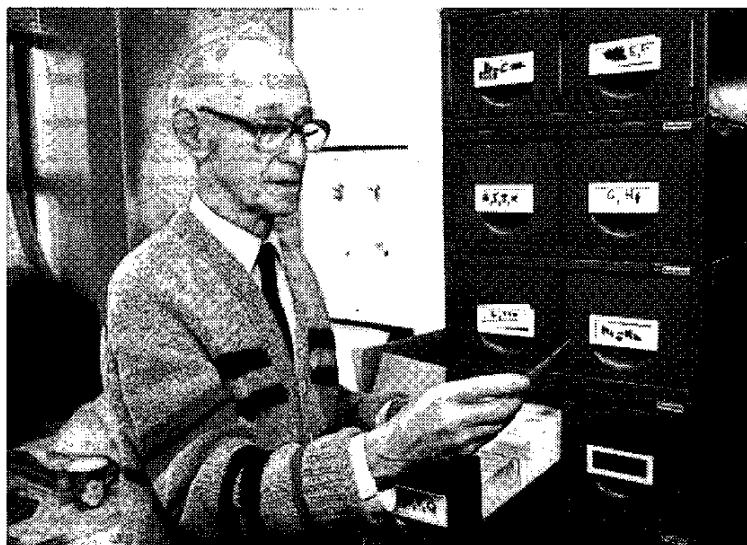
Island restoration was another process that gained momentum at this time. Removal of goats from Macauley Island, cats from Cuvier, sheep from South-East, Mangere and Campbell Islands, and the commencement of revegetation programmes on Stephens and Mangere Islands were the forerunners of the present increasingly successful rat eradications on islands and ambitious mainland island programmes. Those early results were spectacular and an incentive to develop the new 'lifeboats' which were needed to provide extra homes for species needing translocation to survive.

Crucial to the development of skills within the Wildlife Service and among the many volunteers who participated in those programmes, was training. Brian was responsible for the planning and direction for 15 years of the Wildlife trainee scheme, a system which was recognised in its day as the best on the job training in the Government Service.

In the latter part of his Wildlife Service career he provided consultancy advice for a number of international bird and conservation projects in Australia, Seychelles, Mauritius, Christmas Island, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati. This has been developed further, since his retirement from Government service, with the formation and direction of Wildlife Management International Ltd who have undertaken projects for the British Government, European Union, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Galapagos Conservation Trust and Falklands Conservation.

Brian was an important member of the NZ Ornithological Trust Board who organised both the 20th International Ornithological Congress and ICBP (Birdlife International) Conference in 1990. He was a recipient of the Queens Service Medal in 1984 for his contribution to endangered species management and the eradication of exotic animals from islands, and was awarded the Society's Falla Memorial Award in 1987. The Royal Australasian Ornithological Union honoured him with a Fellowship in 1990.

This is but a summary of the life of one of New Zealand's most influential ornithologists - a continual fosterer of bird study who has, in spite of some of the overpowering problems presented by the slide of so many species towards extinction, remained an optimist. He has continually tried to push the boundaries of what people generally expect is possible by operating in his own words with 'a tenacious pigheadedness'.



**John Warham**

Although John began observing, photographing and writing about birds at an early age, it was not until relatively late in life that he began his academic training and became established as a professional ornithologist. When he left school in