

FRED KINSKY

Those who knew Fred remember him as a tall, elegant, gracious gentleman with impeccable manners. When he came to New Zealand in the late 1940s, he brought his ornithological skills with him — he had one of the largest egg collections in Czechoslovakia before he was forced to leave. After arrival he took several short-term positions including a brief period at the Patent Office, and with the Forest Service at Rai Valley and Dumgree Forests in Marlborough. It was at the latter Fred recorded seeing linnets, which was of interest to BDB who had seen one in the neighbouring Wairau Valley about the same time.

Fred got back to birds when he joined the then Wildlife Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs as photographer. During the 1950s members became more familiar with Fred because of his bird photographs which began to appear in *Notornis*. He moved from Wildlife to the Dominion Museum, starting as a clerical officer. That appointment did not, however, prevent him from becoming involved in bird study: he began with the birds close at hand — little penguins and black-backed gulls on Somes Island. In the mid 1950s he took over the direction of the banding scheme when the Ornithological Society transferred it to the Museum.

It was as banding officer that Fred became well known to all OSNZ members and many of the active banders became firm friends. Banding became a much more important part of bird study and the number of birds banded grew annually under Fred's stewardship. His interests were wider than just banding and he was able to put time into various projects and to continue his studies on penguins. When he was joined in the banding office by CJR he had more freedom to extend these studies to penguins in Antarctica and golden plover in Niue.

One thing that never changed, at least in Fred's opinion, was the departure of the first tram in the morning from Island Bay where he lived. He claimed it was at 10 a.m. and that that was pre-dawn. Fred, of

course, had been busy until 2 or 3 a.m. with his other major interest — bird stamps. A major change did come for Fred when the Banding Scheme was transferred to the Wildlife Service. CJR went with the scheme but Fred stayed on at the Museum with more responsibility, as Curator of Birds. He encouraged members to send in specimens of the common introduced birds, which were poorly represented in the collections. He also arranged for representative collections of petrel species to be made from various breeding colonies, rather than to be represented only by beach-wrecked specimens of unknown origin.

He played a major role in encouraging people to participate in bird study through the many courses he presented through the Adult Education programme. However it was his willingness to talk and listen to everyone who came to ask about birds or who wanted to share stories about them that most impressed visitors. He made a big contribution to the Society as a member of Council and then as President (1971-75). He participated in many annual meetings and field outings, including the Society's aborted 25th Anniversary Expedition to the Kermadec Islands. He was convener for the 2nd edition of the *Checklist of the birds of New Zealand* (1970) and the 1980 additions and amendments.

Fred will be remembered as a genial, even if not the most practical, member of many field exercises. The Museum will reflect his influence for many years to come (see appreciation by Bartle & Yaldwyn). Most of all he inspired many people to participate in and enjoy bird study. For the more senior members of the Society his passing will be a loss of an esteemed friend but he leaves many happy and rewarding memories. We extend our sympathy to his daughters Paula and Alexandra, his sons-in-law, and grandchildren.

BRIAN D. BELL

CHRIS J. ROBERTSON

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When visiting New Zealand in 1961 en route to Britain, one of the people I needed most to meet was Fred Kinsky, as we had corresponded about our parallel studies on blue penguins and various shearwaters so had quite a lot to talk over. Taking us under his wing, Fred introduced us to the New Zealand blue penguin at his study colony on Somes Island (then a quarantine station). I recall 1 pair on eggs in an old discarded oven, the nest being inspected by simply lifting one of the cover plates! Fred discovered that the hatchling penguin had tubular nostrils — an interesting finding in view of the widely-held belief that penguins and albatrosses share

a common ancestor. The stainless steel band that he developed for these small penguins has proved very effective and they have lasted on birds for many years. On this early visit, and later, we enjoyed Fred and Camilla's hospitality at Island Bay while they also stayed with us in Durham City and in Christchurch.

Another facet of Fred's work was his study of plumage changes with age in the black-backed gull. I put his findings to work back in the 1970s when taking a course on population ecology: armed with sets of his photographs the students worked out the age compositions of the birds at the various Christchurch

rubbish tips, the results proving fertile sources of debate and argument.

Once in the 1970s, we had a flat tyre when returning from Jackson's Bay after checking my Fiordland crested penguins, my old Ford Prefect being overloaded and ill-designed to cope with atrocious roads with loose stones, boulders, soft sand, and mud. Although Fred had a reputation for standing back and letting others do the donkey work, on this occasion he pitched in with a will to help offload our gear to reach the spare tyre. I guess he was glad to uncoil his long legs and, like me, eager to escape the toils of the Lindis Pass.

Fred was born in Czechoslovakia into a very well known central European family, his full title being Friedrich-Carl Graf Kinsky von Wchinitz und Tettau. When the Communists took over in 1948 he was tipped off that the family land and property would be confiscated and he imprisoned as an "undesirable". Fred decided that the family had to leave the country. His wife Camilla was Swiss, but being Czech by marriage, was not allowed to leave, so they divorced to re-establish her Swiss nationality. However, presumably because the children were still Czech citizens, they still could not leave. Her solution was to take them ostensibly on a picnic from which they diverted over the mountains through the Iron Curtain to freedom in Germany. They were handed on from guide to guide on the way. Camilla recalled that one of her major worries was to keep the children quiet when passing border posts – all wore heavy clothing for the mountain crossing so were hot and very weary. Fred himself managed to get a permit from the Prague Museum to collect butterflies in a reserve close to the border and once there continued sweeping his net into Germany. He spent some time in a refugee camp but through his sister in Germany met a British officer recently back from New Zealand, who

sang its praises. So he was soon back in the free world, remarried Camilla, and the family eventually reached New Zealand, the country farthest from Communist influences. For many years he was unable to correspond directly with his parents in Czechoslovakia: letters had to be routed through a relative in Germany.

In New Zealand, Fred was directed initially to labouring work in various services, including the Forest Service, which he found hard. Presently, however, Dr Robert Falla made a place for him at the Dominion Museum, and the rest is part of the history of New Zealand ornithology.

We were sorry when the Kinskys retired to London to be near their families – his home in Strawberry Hill was in the same street as his daughter Alex – and Fred's ornithological work now faded except that he continued building his massive collection of postage stamps featuring birds, real or imaginary. I recall once catching up with him in Stanley Gibbons's shop in The Strand. Nothing tickled him more than to find a stamp with a bird wrongly named, a booby called an albatross, and so on... We last saw him in 1996 when we shared a meal in a London restaurant.

Fred was of distinguished appearance, tall, impeccably mannered, and always courteous and prepared to give his time to an enquirer. He was a gentleman in the best sense of the term, and one with an excellent sense of humour. In his last years he suffered a stroke and, although well cared for at a rest home at Sassenburg, Germany, near his daughter Paula, his failed memory was a trial to him. He is buried in Twickenham with his wife who predeceased him by 11 years, and is survived by his 2 daughters and 9 grandchildren. He made quite an impact on New Zealand ornithology and many of us have happy memories of our associations with him.

JOHN WARHAM