

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP



At the 1980 annual general meeting, the Society unanimously elected Professor Brian John Marples as Honorary Life Member of the Society. Soon after he took up the Chair of Zoology at the University of Otago in 1937 he wrote to various ornithologists in New Zealand suggesting that an ornithological society should be formed here. This proposal initiated discussions which resulted in the founding of the Society in 1939. Professor Marples was its first secretary-treasurer and he was responsible for the initial organisation, as the following comment in the introduction to the first report shows. "Until the first annual meeting was held in May 1940, the organising secretary has had to do practically all the work and in some districts regional organisers had not even been appointed. Consequently there has been some delay in the task of collecting and collating the reports on birds submitted by members." From these reports the publishable

sections had to be extracted, sorted and finally typed. They occupied almost 16 typed foolscap pages of the 33-page cyclostyled first publication of the Society. So Professor Marples was also, in effect, the first editor.

He continued in this capacity with some assistance from Dr R. A. Falla until 1943 when Dr Falla went off on the Cape Expedition. Dr Falla joined him again in late 1944 and they continued to produce the by then printed *NZ Bird Notes*. In 1947 Professor Marples became president and gave up the journal editing and the position of secretary-treasurer. He was president for two years.

During this period he initiated and ran the first bird ringing scheme in New Zealand, the major outcome of which was the 'Report on trapping and ringing work on the White-eye *Zosterops lateralis* throughout the Dominion' (*NZ Bird Notes* 1: 41-48, 1944). This was the first special study by the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. It is probably fair to say that the success of this project fostered the interest of members in ringing and the Society started its own ringing scheme from which has grown the present national banding scheme.

His unassuming council in the Society has had far-reaching effects. He was always accessible for discussion and advice, and both amateur and professional ornithologists sought them from him. His deep understanding of ornithology, especially in the field, has had a profound effect on many of his students, who in turn have made their impact on ornithology in New Zealand and overseas.

Professor Marples' initiative launched the Society. His effective hard work established a pattern for the publication of the classified summarised notes — one of the most important contributions to the knowledge of New Zealand birds. He served the Society well in its important formative years. The success of the Society owes much to his unassuming enthusiasm for ornithology and his ability to convey it to others.

It is fitting that the Society should recognise his contributions by making him an Honorary Life Member — the highest honour that the Society can bestow.

— L. GURR