

## OBITUARY

## NOEL MORRISON JACK

It is only necessary to peruse Noel Jack's first contribution to *Emu* (49: 26-34, 1949) dealing with territorial and nesting behaviour of the Rufous Whistler, to be assured that he had a deep commitment not only for ornithology but love of nature generally. This was probably stimulated by the Gould League, then active in Queensland, and Leach's *Australian Bird Book*, whilst still a pupil at St. Joseph's College. He served in the Australian Military Forces during the Second World War from 1941 to 1945 as a sapper in the Royal Australian Engineers. His occupation for most of his life otherwise was that of painter, being active for some time as a Union delegate. He was an only child and never married. His cousin, Mrs Jackson of Wilston, is his nearest relative, to whom I am indebted for information.

A personal friendship began when I travelled to Brisbane to be installed as RAOU President in 1958, but through a bad bout of influenza after arrival I was confined to my room at the hotel for a day or two, but well remember that my first visitor whilst there was Noel Jack, then the newly-elected Queensland Branch Secretary. During the years since we had kept up regular correspondence and on at least two occasions his visits to Sydney coincided with those of Roy Wheeler from Melbourne and the few days we three were able to renew companionship enjoying the birdlife in the field together (we were all somewhat the same age) were memorable occasions.

After a record term by George Barker as Queensland State Secretary for the RAOU for well over 30 years, and a brief period when K.B. Walker held that office, Noel Jack became the elected State Secretary in 1958 after he had served on Council as a State Representative for six years previously. This ended in 1969 when such an official posting on the RAOU Council was discontinued. However, he remained a Regional Representative until 1977. Thus Noel held some official post in the Union continuously for over 25 years.

During the early part of this time and before the formation of the Queensland Ornithological Society, regular meetings of the ornithological fraternity in the Brisbane area were held in the ornithology room and

later in the lecture room-theatrette of the Queensland Museum when George Mack was Director and Don Vernon was connected with the same institution and became ornithologist there in 1963, retiring in 1981. Jack Robertson and most prominent members of the RAOU around Brisbane attended these gatherings, where study skins were always available. *Queensland Bird Notes* continued for some years as the medium through which members contributed papers and domestic matters were discussed. Many of Noel Jack's writings appeared in that journal, although he sent articles and forwarded State Secretary reports to *Emu* frequently.

A small publication *A List of the Birds of Brisbane*, apparently personally financed, was compiled in 1963 and a "Supplementary List" added in 1967. These two contributions to ornithology materially assisted students at that time in the Brisbane area. In his later years he was active in compiling a history of the Cardwell district ornithology, through a number of visits to a close living nearby, and a rather large summary of his efforts was forwarded to me, although I have no knowledge if such was intended for publication. This was included in the final letter I received from Noel, and in that also he mentioned that he had picked up a dead Oriental Cuckoo near his home at Paddington, which he immediately took to the Brisbane Museum to be made into a study skin. Even birds that had succumbed for some reason or other could be valuable for study.

I cannot conclude better than re-iterate Don Vernon's tribute forwarded to me — "Noel Jack was a straight forward but reserved man of high principle who passionately loved the Queensland bush and its avian life. He was most happy when with a bag on shoulder, binoculars around neck, pencil and pad in hand, he would wander the ranges, hills and river near Brisbane in search of the bird species he knew and loved so well. He was an amateur ornithologist of rare dedication to his subject and he will long be remembered for his important contributions to the study of birds of southern Queensland and especially those of Brisbane and its environs".

Arnold McGill