

Obituary

ARNOLD ROBERT MCGILL

Arnold Robert McGill, FRZS, FRAOU, OAM, died after a short illness on 29 July 1988 at the age of 83 years. He was born near Tooraweenah, N.S.W., on 3 July 1905 and took a keen interest in birds by the time he was eight years old. He used cigarette cards, illustrated with Australian birds as his reference until he was able to save four shillings from his threepence per week pocket money. With the savings he bought a copy of the First Edition of *An Australian Bird Book* by J.A. Leach.

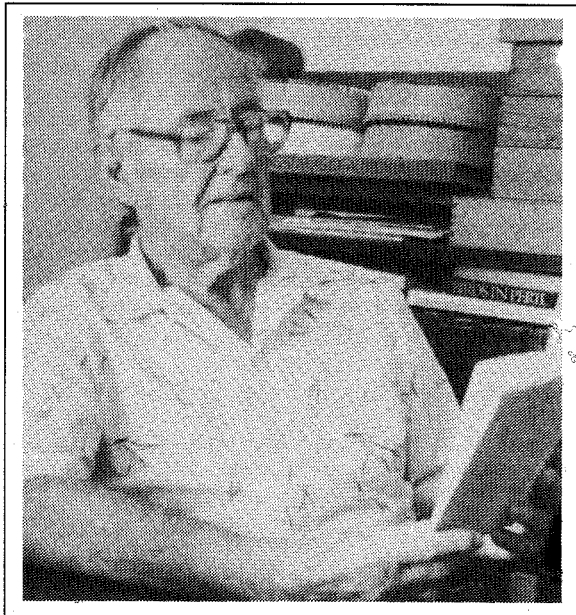
His father was a shearer who became a grocer, eventually owning his own business. Arnold followed in the family business, first in the central west of the state and later in Sydney at Arncliffe. At the latter stage of his working life he managed a wholesale grocery chain.

Arnold's knowledge and memory for avian systematics and taxonomy on a world scale was outstanding. This frequently involved him in correspondence with leading ornithologists in Australia and overseas, among whom he was held in high regard.

In 1941 he joined the RAOU and so began a distinguished record with Australia's senior ornithological group. He contributed a vast number of notes and papers to *The Emu* between 1942 and 1966, and to other ornithological journals. He held offices in the RAOU as follows: NSW Branch Secretary (1944-1960), Assistant Editor *Emu* (1948-1969), Vice President (1955-1958) and President (1958-1959).

Probably the most notable contribution he made to ornithology in Australia was his compilation of *A Species Index to The Emu*. The first index in 1953 covers Vols. 1-50 (1901-1951), then in 1962 Vols 51-60 (1951-1960) and finally in 1972 Vols. 61-70 (1961-1970). The enormity of this task could only have been carried out by someone with dedication, meticulous accuracy, exceptional knowledge of the subject and the determination to complete the task. It involved searching through more than 18 000 pages of *The Emu* covering the first 50 years and accurately recording the monumental detail. Arnold McGill had the qualities necessary to complete the job successfully — a permanent record of his outstanding effort. He subsequently compiled the indices of authors and species for each volume from 1971 to 1987 and, undoubtedly, had the ones for 1988 in hand at the time of his death.

His first publication was a *Field Identification of Wading Birds*, a most useful tabulated text when nothing else of its kind was available for a group of birds so difficult to



identify. This was followed shortly afterwards by a *Field Guide to the Waders* with H.T. Condon. In 1958 he was co-author with Keith Hindwood with *The Birds of Sydney*; then came *A Handlist of the Birds of New South Wales* in 1960, *Australian Warblers* in 1970 and with Alan Morris and Glenn Holmes, *A Handlist of Birds in New South Wales* in 1981.

He was Scientific Editor and Honorary Consultant for *The Wrens and Warblers of Australia* (1982) published by the National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife. He was associated with Alex Chisholm and again with Keith Hindwood in a revision of *What Bird Is That?* in 1959. The *Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds* (1976) contained 42 items contributed by Arnold McGill.

Meticulous and extremely methodical with his bird notes, he maintained records of these to the last. His detailed knowledge of species distribution was remarkable and he enthusiastically shared his knowledge of birds with others, regularly giving illustrated talks to a wide range of audiences. A great number of people owe their keen interest in birds to him.

Arnold McGill was an active member of numerous

ornithological groups in addition to the RAOU. He was Secretary of the Ornithological Section of the Royal Zoological Society of N.S.W. which held combined meetings with the NSW Branch of the RAOU for many years, and he was a Fellow of that Society. He became a Fellow of the RAOU in 1965 and was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for services to ornithology in 1984.

His death ended a friendship of more than 40 years. I will greatly miss his continued encouragement, extensive knowledge and his loyalty, but I will cherish the many memories of our birding activities when we sought birds together in many varied places.

Arnold was predeceased by his wife, Bertie, in 1982. She had continuously given him loving support in all his ornithological involvements and was almost as well known among the birding fraternity as Arnold himself. During the last six years he had greatly missed his life's partner.

Sincere condolences are extended to his son Donald, his daughter-in-law Ruth and his three grand-children Jeff, Simon and Megan.

S.G. (Bill) Lane

Obituary

DR DOMINIC LOUIS SERVenty

Dom Serventy, Australia's internationally and locally best-known ornithologist, died in Perth on 8 August 1988. He was born in Kalgoorlie in 1904 and spent most of his childhood and youth in Maddington. An early friendship with Ludwig Glauer, then Director of the Western Australian Museum, set him to becoming an ornithologist. Otto Lipfert, the Museum's taxidermist, taught him to make bird skins.

Dom graduated B.Sc. with First Class honours in Zoology, won a prestigious 1851 Science Research Scholarship enabling him to enrol at Cambridge and was subsequently awarded a Ph.D. from there. Whilst in Europe he met and married his German-born wife Gertrude. On his return to Perth he lectured in zoology for three years at the University of Western Australia. In 1937 he joined the Fisheries Division of CSIRO at Cronulla, Sydney, to carry out studies on tuna and other marine fish. Over the next dozen years he was a prominent member of Sydney's ornithological circle, taking part in field trips and inspiring interest in the scientific study of birds. Research on derelict seabirds on beaches, inspired by Dom, continues to this day.

