

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.

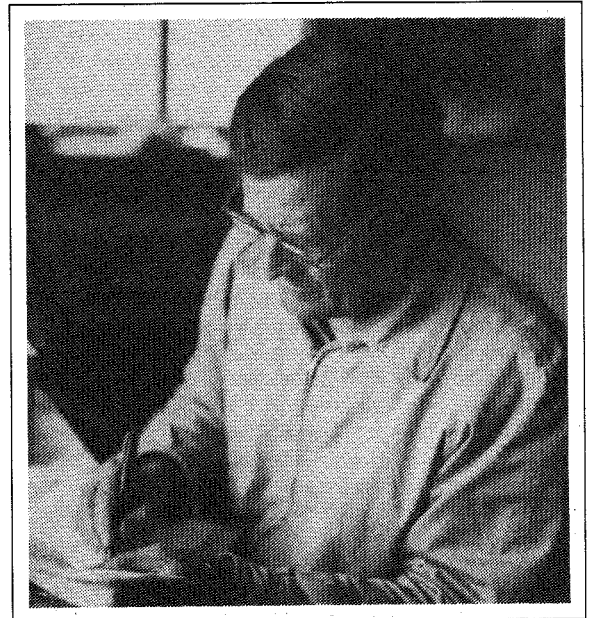
S.G. (Bill) Lane

## 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.



In 1951 he transferred to the CSIRO's newly formed Wildlife Section to study the Short-tailed Shearwater on the islands of Bass Strait. Based once more in Perth he made bi-annual trips (November-December and February-March) to Flinders Island, individually banding thousands of the burrowing birds as part of a continuing life history study that was to last 20 years. The result is perhaps the greatest study yet made on a procellariiform sea-bird and includes detailed data on reproduction, population dynamics, migration, longevity, behaviour and feeding. The banding data also achieved the goal of determining the proportion of young being harvested commercially so that quotas could be set. A result was world-wide renown. For this and other conservation studies he was appointed Knight of the Golden Ark in the Netherlands. Previously he had been elected a Corresponding Member of various ornithological unions including those of Britain and Germany. He was made a Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1949 and Honorary Fellow in 1970. At his death he was the Senior Fellow of the RAOU.

After World War II his brother Vincent and his sister Lucy, revived the ailing Western Australian Naturalists' Club, which rapidly became the leading state body of its type. Dom assisted in this work and this Club became famous for its quarterly journal, *Western Australian Naturalist*, thanks largely to Dom's 33 years as Editor. From the beginning Dom inspired and encouraged field ornithologists to develop research projects for publication in the *Naturalist*. Many important findings, not only in ornithology, but in natural history generally, soon came to grace its pages. The Serventy-Whittell book *Birds of Western Australia*, still Australia's leading regional bird guide, was developed through progressive editions over this period. The volume is characterised by original data on such subjects as the climatic and vegetation control of bird distributions, bird speciation and evolution, breeding seasons, habits, bird weights, etc. and the early history of ornithology.

Dom was an exceptional person to know and have as a friend. His enthusiasm for ornithology was infectious. A few minutes in his company, in town or in the field, would make one forget any other subject. Ornithology was central, it was the important thing. His knowledge of birds was profound whether the subject be taxonomics, distributions, biogeography, behaviour, feeding, or breeding seasons. He read incessantly and no new development or idea escaped him. He never missed an opportunity to accumulate data. On his road trips all birds seen were recorded and related to mileage. Eventually such data was to contribute to his extensive sets of bird distribution maps, and provide data on seasonal and long-term shifts in abundance of birds.

Dom inspired a generation of ornithologists. Gentilli's work on climatic controls of distributions and on refuge

areas, published in *The Emu* in 1949, stems from him. The Carnaby and Robinson work on breeding seasons, and the latter's comprehensive studies on the magpie-lark and magpie, are other notable examples. In turn, the close association of Dom with the other ornithological greats of his day, Charles Fleming, Keith Hindwood, Alex Chisholm and others, helped both parties and materially advanced knowledge of many facets of Australian ornithology.

Dr Serventy was a major contributor to scientific journals and his papers number in the hundreds. He first published in *The Emu* in the 1920s. Contributions covered all areas from biogeography and speciation to breeding seasons and general biology. Major reviews included the one on desert birds in *Avian Biology* (1971), and contributions to International Ornithological Congress proceedings. He was co-author, with Vincent Serventy and John Warham, of *The Handbook of Australian Seabirds*.

Overseas, Dom was certainly Australia's best-known ornithologist. He was the one scientists contacted when they wished to work in Australia, for research ideas, help with travel arrangements and collecting permits. Members of the British Museum's Harold Hall Expeditions (1962-1970) cannot speak too highly of his help. Dom saw helping overseas scientists as a means of gaining greater knowledge of Australian birds; knowledge that would help the causes of science and conservation.

As a friend Dom was kindly, generous and very helpful. He was unstinting in his praise of the work of others. In his scientific papers he went out of his way to give credit where credit was due, in contrast to some contemporaries. Colleagues found this flattering and encouraging.

Dom Serventy's contributions to Australian natural history have been great. This is acknowledged by the honours bestowed upon him, including the Australian Natural History Medallion in 1956, Royal Society of Western Australia Medal in 1979, and appointment as Honorary Associate of the W.A. Museum in 1974. He served as President of the RAOU and in various positions in the W.A. Naturalists' Club, was a Member of the Executive Committee of the International Ornithological Congress, and on many councils and advisory bodies. These obvious honours cannot, however, reflect Dom's unobtrusive and long-term influence on conservation, Government policies, and the cause of natural history generally.

A very considerable collection of bird journals has been left to the Western Australian Museum which also is the recipient of the Serventy-Whittell skins.

Dom is survived by three sons. His wife Gertrude died in 1977. Not only his family but all of us are sad losers by his passing.

A. Keast