

# RAOU Fellow: Citation

## NORMAN CHAFFER OAM

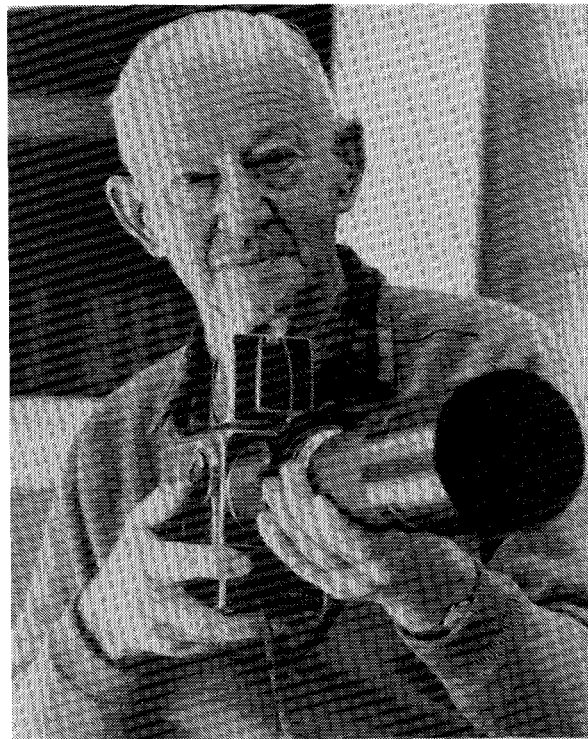
Most of the common knowledge concerning birds that we take for granted today was first documented by the early bird observers with papers and photographs in the pages of *The Emu*.

Norman Chaffer was brought up in that era when there was great interest in bird photography using large cameras with black and white glass plates. When he joined the RAOU in 1921, the standard of black and white bird photography was excellent and by the calibre of Norman's work, it was not long before his photographs were equally as good as his more experienced fellow members.

Norman has been photographing birds for 65 years, and was a pioneer of colour cinematography. Peter Slater, in his *Masterpieces of Australian Bird Photography*, described him as the 'Grand Master' of bird photography in Australia. Norman has always encouraged budding photographers, and his many proteges have included the late Roy Cooper, Ellis McNamara and Jack Waterhouse, to name a few. Several benefited sufficiently from his guidance to become world-class photographers. The slides and photographs taken by Norman and his colleagues were often displayed at bird meetings and inspired new members to join the RAOU.

I first met Norman in 1945 when he was showing his coloured movies to a WEA class. I introduced myself and explained my enthusiasm in this pastime. I was keen to see my first lyrebird's nest, which had been highlighted in the press at the time when Norman and Keith Hindwood escorted the then Governor-General, the Duke of Gloucester, to a gully in East Lindfield, a northern suburb of Sydney. After showing a friend and me the nest the following weekend, Norman headed for home. He was gone for about five minutes but then returned to ask us if we would like to see an Owlet Nightjar he had disturbed from a low tree spout. It was still there when we walked back. The whole scene is one of my most enjoyable reminiscences of the past.

Norman is highly respected in business and ornithological circles. He is a first class field worker in bird behaviour through his many years of experience, which has taken him to many parts of Australia. He was President of the RAOU in 1954-5 and a Fellow of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW. He was awarded an OAM in 1979 for 'Services to Conservation'. He wrote and il-



lustrated many articles in the pages of *The Emu* and many other publications in Australia and overseas. One memorable article in *The Emu* in 1956, with Alex Chisholm as co-author, was believed to be the first time the Golden Bowerbird had been photographed. He took both motion and still pictures in colour. Another notable article published in the *National Geographic* in 1961, titled 'Australia's Amazing Bower Birds', was illustrated with his superb photographs. His book, *In Quest of Bowerbirds* published in 1984, relates the highlights from sixty years of observing and photographing these birds in the wild. They had first captured his attention in 1923, when he was shown the handiwork of some Satin Bowerbirds.

The study of birds has been a life-long interest for Norman, together with a devoted association with the RAOU. His enthusiasm has spurred many people to strive, like him, for a greater understanding of bird behaviour, conservation and the art of bird photography. These achievements have rightfully earned him a Fellowship of his beloved RAOU.

E.S. Hoskin