

D.L. Serventy Medal: Citation

IAN CECIL ROBERT ROWLEY

Ian Rowley's lifetime contribution to our knowledge of the biology of birds has been undertaken in Australia. But his contribution to ornithology and the recognition that has gone with it is international. His first work on Australian birds was done while he was reading for his Bachelor of Agriculture Science degree at the University of Melbourne. Then he found time to record the activities of the birds of Dookie Agricultural College. After graduation, when he was working on rabbits with the CSIRO Wildlife Survey Section in Canberra, he began a study of the Superb Fairy-wren. His studies, as they developed, attracted increasing attention from international ornithologists, because they demonstrated clearly that new conceptual tools were needed to analyse the complex kin relationships manifest in many of our birds and because they had crucial implications for evolutionary biology.

The studies emphasised that the offspring of a few dominant individuals formed the bulk of the subsequent generation, a situation that has now been found to characterise recruitment in many species, not just those of communal breeders. Ian's work highlighted the importance of tradition and knowledge of territory in individual survival, giving point to the length of time some immatures will spend 'helping' in their parental territory.

Throughout his work Ian has concentrated on studies of colour-banded individuals, the results indicating the importance of knowing who is who when measuring breeding success and population density. These meticulous studies have had a multiplier effect throughout Australian ornithology. Seeing the splendid results of



attention to accuracy and detail, many students working for higher degrees have adopted similar techniques and our knowledge of the life histories of Australian birds has benefited accordingly.

Ian has published in many Australian and international ornithological journals, as well as writing two important books, *Bird Life* and *Behavioural Ecology of the Galah in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia*. He has contributed to many symposia and conferences, working in their organisation as well as adding to their substance. His work is widely known because Ian has the ability and willingness to discuss it with anyone who is interested, giving many ornithologists an opportunity for that personal contact which is the catalyst of so much good work. In doing so he has provided inspiration to many amateurs as well as professionals, advanced Australian ornithology greatly over the past 40 years, and, we hope, will continue to do so for many years to come. He richly deserves the honour of receiving the inaugural Serventy Medal.

S.J.J.F. Davies