

OBITUARIES

REGINALD ERNEST MOREAU

Perhaps Reg Moreau, who died on 30 May 1970, aged 73, was not well known to many Australians except by reputation, but he had been an honorary member of the Union since 1949, visited Australia as the guest of CSIRO during 1963, and co-operated with M. G. Ridpath in an important paper on Tasmanian birds which was published in the 'Ibis' in 1966. Thus, it is appropriate to pay a tribute to an outstanding international ornithologist of our time. This notice makes no attempt to cover his biographical details, list his achievements or recount his honours, all of which were many and great. It is intended more as an acknowledgement of a personal debt.

In the 1920s, as an auditor of army accounts Moreau went to Egypt where, twelve years after he had left, he was still remembered by a former business colleague with affectionate indulgence for his ornithological activities ('disappearing into the desert whenever he could'.) From Egypt in 1928 he went to Amani in Tanzania as secretary and librarian in the East African Agricultural Research Institute where he quickly became famous for his ornithological work. In 1947 he retired early for health reasons and joined the Edward Grey Institute at Oxford as research worker on African ornithology, and at the same time took over editorship of the 'Ibis'. From then until he retired in 1964, and indeed until he died, he exerted a tremendous influence not only by his direct contributions to the science but also indirectly through his editorship. Receiving the 'Ibis' in 1947 as a somewhat pedestrian and old-fashioned journal, he handed it on in 1960 as one of the leading international periodicals. Few authors who came in contact with him can have failed to benefit from his critical advice on subject matter, presentation and English. It was Somerset Maugham who said that, once he realized how much he wanted to say, he abandoned all attempts to develop an impressive style and concentrated on saying what he had to say in the simplest and plainest words; it might just as

easily have been Reg Moreau. When it was admitted to him, perhaps grudgingly, that he had been right in saying that an original submission could be cut down by at least one third without loss and with advantage, he grinned and said: 'Well, you usually can, you know', but conceded that he met his match in Alexander Skutch. If anyone is inclined to recognize any editorial benefits or merits in our own journal, it is gratefully acknowledged that they are derived from Moreau.

He was *simpatico*, a genial and cheerful companion, unfailing with helpful advice modestly and humourously given, unassuming personally and courageous. He made light of the arthritis which crippled him in the last years of his life and still managed ornithological excursions outside Britain. Three times since January 1970 he had nearly died; yet in February he wrote in such a way of a 'bit of a kerfuffle' from which he was 'floated back into circulation by 8 pints of somebody else's blood' that his cheerfulness dispelled one's fears. He was engaged to the last on a book (*The Palaearctic-African Bird Migration System*) and wrote in March, hoping that it 'now $\frac{3}{4}$ done . . . would be finished before I am'. Happily it was, and Dr J. F. Monk, who has kindly supplied information for this notice and is his literary executor, expects that it will be published in 1971.

His research was prodigious and he had an immense worldwide correspondence. In December 1968 he felt 'more mentally alert' than he had ever been, and even in last March he was 'continuing to turn up the most fascinating new and unexpected oddments'. No matter where one was, there was no knowing when one might get a searching question into some detail of ornithology—the status of Tawny Eagles ('these bloody birds') in Iraq, habitats along the Red Sea coast or Palaearctic migrants in the Nigerian forest. Now there will be no more and he will be sadly missed by many people all over the world.

S.M.

FRANCIS GORDON ELFORD

The sudden death of Francis Gordon Elford, B.Sc., B.Ed., on 18 June 1970, removed from the RAOU a staunch and long-standing member. Born at Ballarat on 5 March 1907 and educated at Ballarat High School, Melbourne Teachers' College and the University of Melbourne, Gordon Elford had held a

number of academic posts having been Assistant Master at Ballarat High School, a Lecturer at Melbourne Teachers' College, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the School of Education, University of Melbourne, where his lectures in geography were recognized as being distinguished.

He had also held appointments as Ornithologist at the National Museum of Victoria during 1947, and as Secretary, Faculty of Medicine, the University of Melbourne 1948-63; he was the University Deputy Registrar at the time of his death.

It is doubtful whether he was devoted to natural history as a youngster, but he was a schoolboy contemporary of Mr D. Fleay in Ballarat and it was with him that he made probably his first camping trip in quest for the Powerful Owl. His genuine interest in education was expressed not only professionally through his teaching posts but also through his pursuit of natural history which developed with his academic and teacher training and almost certainly under the influence of the renowned Major Wilson (cf. 'Wild Life', November 1942: 430). As a teacher in the Education Department of Victoria he compiled the widely known booklet, *Circular of Information 0*, which contained a yearly coverage of varied natural history topics. In 1939-40 under the Gillies Bequest he also took part, with Mr E. J. Perry of the RMIT, in the preparation of Nature Study Film Strips for schools including those on the Lyrebird and Mallee Fowl. He broadcast to schools on nature study over the ABC. Under the pen-name of 'Ped', presumably standing for 'Pedagogue', and later under his own name, he wrote an extensive series of nature articles for schools in 'Wild Life'. These reflected his wide interest and knowledge and his keen desire to stimulate a love of natural history in others.

His work as Ornithologist at the National Museum of Victoria carried on this interest. It was he who initiated the scheme, now employing four full-time Education Officers, whereby educational loans and lectures are provided for schools, and memoranda on this plan in his meticulous hand are in museum files. There, too, is a note on the idea of a Gould League Annual.

His concepts were those of a clear-thinking organizer and administrator, and for the advancement of ornithology his hope was to see a continuum of inspiration and training from the school-level through the Gould League to bird-observing societies, as exemplified by the BOC, and to active membership of the RAOU.

In natural history, and especially ornithology, Gordon Elford was a quietly inspired educator in the Hall-Leach-Wilson-Morrison succession, and the durability of his interest in this was nowhere better evidenced than at the Extraordinary General Meeting in June 1969 when he spoke in support of RAOU changes. His published ornithological papers, not numerous, were also oriented towards education rather than research.

A member of the Council of the RAOU from 1947 to 1957 inclusive, Gordon Elford gave very substantial service to this society, and his readiness and ability to give service continued till his death. The Council extends its sympathy to his wife who survives him.

A. R. McE.