

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF ORNITHOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND

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The development of ornithology in New Zealand has much in common with the Australian pattern but has certainly not mirrored it. New Zealand lies too far from eastern Australia to be considered an outlying archipelago. Its ancient continental history and long isolation gave ample opportunity for development of differences between its plants and animals and those of other southern continents, with which it had once been joined. The later colonists among land and fresh-water birds have come mainly from Australia so that New Zealand has generally been ranked as a subregion of the Australian Region. Yet the endemic families and orders, whose origins date further back in Tertiary or even Mesozoic time, show little direct and unambiguous relation with Australian groups.

Settled about half a century later than Tasmania and New South Wales, New Zealand, as could be expected, at first lacked ornithological organizations and early studies of its birds were undertaken by visitors from Europe, mostly missionaries and explorers. A few distinctive species were illustrated in Gould's *Birds of Australia* (1840-69) but it must have soon become clear that such a combination would not suit different 'markets' on either side of the Tasman.

A local population of New Zealand ornithologists developed among the settlers, most of them collectors (Buller, Mantell and others) but some primarily interested in the living bird, like T. H. Potts.

SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES

As in the Australian States, the first organizations to develop were general, catering for science, art, and literature—the short-lived New Zealand Society (1851-1868) and the New Zealand Institute, which federated local philosophical institutes in the main centres. New Zealand had neither the area nor the population of an average Australian State and its population (even its urban population) was more evenly distributed, among half-a-dozen or more provincial and district towns, in each of which a small group of naturalists (chiefly amateurs) struggled to hold meetings. The chief function of the federal body was to publish (from 1869 onwards) a periodical for papers delivered before such local bodies, the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*, in which a

considerable number of papers on ornithology were published during the next fifty years.

The number of ornithologists in New Zealand, let alone in any one centre, was too small to give much encouragement to formation of a specialized splinter-group. Keen bird-students like J. C. McLean joined the BOU and published in IBIS, and after 1900 the RAOU attracted New Zealand members. At just about the same time the growth of the University of New Zealand increased the number of professional scholars; the content of the *Transactions* became more professional, ornithology was thought of as an amateur's hobby and contributions on birds were almost entirely excluded until E. F. Stead published short papers there in 1936 and L. E. Richdale, seeking a vehicle for his prodigious output, was successful in publishing life-histories and behavioural studies in the *Transactions* in the early 1940s. The Royal Society of New Zealand (as the Institute became in 1933) survived to function as an academy of science for New Zealand, with a federal structure unique among such academics, its member bodies now including the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

CONSERVATION OF BIRDS

In 1923, the Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand (Inc.) (RFBPS) was founded by the late Captain E. V. Sanderson 'to advocate and obtain sufficient protection of our native forests and birds and the preservation of sanctuaries, and scenic and other reserves, in the native state, and to enlist the practical sympathy of both young and old in these objects.' Its function was thus protection and education, and not primarily study. Helped by profits from an Art Union, the Society has flourished, with a healthy membership swollen by junior members. It has regional branches and local sections, each with an annual programme of meetings and field-outings, and it successfully organizes nature-camps in the summer. In 1963 it received the Queen's permission to add the word Royal to its title. For many years it has issued a journal *Forest and Bird*.

The RFBPS has on many occasions succeeded in its efforts as a pressure group to influence Government policy in the interest of conservation. The instance fresh in our memories has been the campaign (apparently successful) to ensure that Lake

Manapouri is maintained at its natural level, and not raised so as to destroy large areas of forest in a National Park in the interest of hydroelectric power production for a Comalco aluminium smelter. But in addition to its function as a conservation body the RFBPS undoubtedly satisfies the constantly growing need for an organization catering for people who are not ambitious to undertake serious studies but who like seeing birds in the field and learning about them. In combining both these functions it resembles its British equivalent, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Government involvement in ornithology is perhaps more permanent (less *ad hoc*) in New Zealand than in Australia.

The Department of Lands and Survey administers crown lands, including National Parks and 'scenic and allied reserves', a phrase embracing sanctuaries, wildlife refuges and reserves for the preservation of fauna and flora. Although the Department has not itself undertaken research, it has long encouraged ornithological studies in the reserves it administers and published reports on birds of its island sanctuaries by their caretakers as long ago as the turn of the century.

The bodies known as 'Acclimatization Societies' seem to be a singularly New Zealand phenomenon. In most of the centres of settlement they strove to better the lot of the colonists by introducing to New Zealand 'useful' plants and animals from overseas, with unfortunate success. To these regional societies the central Government entrusted the management of native as well as introduced game-birds, the right to issue shooting licences for fees and the responsibility for ranging. Central Government, through the Minister and Department of Internal Affairs, has retained the responsibility for general supervision of game, for direct control in some districts and for issuing permits to collect indigenous birds under bird-protection legislation. After World War II the need for investigations on which to base management policies led to establishment and growth of a Wildlife Service undertaking research on waterfowl and other game-birds, on rare and threatened species and on reserves and sanctuaries. The Wildlife Service of the Department of Internal Affairs in 1967 took over from the Museum the administration of the New Zealand bird-banding project, which had been initiated by the Ornithological Society.

A second Government agency engaged in research on birds is the Ecology Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, initially established to study the rabbit. The Division's ecologists have always included some with an interest in birds, and research is at present undertaken on introduced passerines in orchard and pasture lands.

In 1968 a Commission of Inquiry into the Organization of Wildlife Management and Research in New Zealand recommended that governmental work in this field be consolidated under the Department of Lands and Survey but Government has not implemented the recommendations. Maybe a spreading of the interest and responsibility and a certain amount of rivalry are beneficial in their effects.

MUSEUMS AND UNIVERSITIES

The national and metropolitan museums in the main cities of New Zealand have been centres of ornithological research since their foundation in the last part of the nineteenth century, and zoologists on their staffs have often been ornithologists. Change of emphasis from collecting and classification to conservation, life-history and other field studies has not robbed the museums of their place in ornithological studies. Canterbury and Auckland Museums have published ornithological papers in their *Records*.

Not until 1940 was ornithology recognized in the University of New Zealand as a suitable branch of zoology to be the subject of a student's thesis; since then, several members of university zoological departments have been primarily students of birds, strengthening the country's roll of professional ornithologists eager to take part in the organization of the subject.

LOCAL GROUPS

In addition to the Dunedin Field Naturalists' Club, which recently celebrated its centenary, there must have been other local field clubs whose members went out together in weekends, but being informal and publishing no newsletter or journal they have left no memorial. In recent years the local branches of the RFBPS have filled the need for local groups.

In the 1930s birdwatchers in separate districts got to know each other by a kind of grape-vine communication that often had at its nerve centre the author of a weekly 'Nature Notes' column in the Saturday supplement of daily papers (such as J. Drummond, A. T. Pycroft and R. H. D. Stidolph) or a museum curator interested in ornithology. Thus an Auckland traveller travelling south would be furnished with introductions from one bird-enthusiast to another.

For many years bird-enthusiasts were in two camps—those who had been (or still were) collectors of skins or eggs in the pursuit of their ornithological interests and those whose zeal for preservation allowed no place even for scientific collecting. This schism perhaps delayed the organization of the growing number of ornithologists into a society for the advancement of their interests.

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

In the 1930s the growing number of ornithologists in New Zealand (mainly amateurs), the desire for some organized form of communication between them and the success of co-operative national field projects in Great Britain set the stage for foundation of a new society in 1939 largely through the work of B. J. Marples, who had come from Oxford to the Chair of Zoology at University of Otago.

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) aspired to encourage, organize and carry out studies by field work on living birds in their natural state on a national scale. Collecting was to play no part in the activities of the society, which also claimed not to be actively concerned with bird protection, the province of another body. The Society has thrived, unchallenged as the leading New Zealand body in its field, supported by members from all other organizations—societies, government agencies, museums. It has published a quarterly journal (*NOTORNIS*), two editions of an annotated checklist and an annual Christmas card, initiated a national bird-banding scheme, organized a census of gannets and expeditions to the Kermadec Islands, conducted field-study outings, a nest-recording scheme, a beach-patrol project and a distributional survey based on grid-squares, and built the nucleus of a library.

SUMMARY

Unlike Australia, New Zealand has a powerful society

(RFBPS) catering for the ordinary beginner in bird-watching in addition to conservation, corresponding with the RSPB in Britain.

The functions elsewhere fulfilled by local field clubs or bird observers' clubs are to some extent served by local sections and branches of the RFBPS and in the somewhat more scientifically oriented regional activities of the OSNZ.

In a more compact geographical setting than Australia and with a smaller population of ornithologists, New Zealand has an ornithological society to cater for serious studies of birds in the field. Perhaps it must continue to cover more activities than the RAOU because it must, for a long time ahead, provide for the interests of amateurs of several grades as well as the small number of professionals if it is to attract and retain enough members to support its work with their subscriptions and donations. Be that as it may, there seems no present demand for a separate BTO-type institute of field ornithology. This type of activity could perhaps evolve from the existing bodies through extension of the collaboration already evident between the OSNZ, government agencies, museums and individuals, both amateur and professional, in the conduct of several recent expeditions to outlying islands.

The establishment of a permanent field station with paid staff where serious amateurs might join in research projects using modern field-techniques might best be organized on a crown reserve, where the New Zealand fauna and flora persist in the least modified condition, as a co-operative venture.

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