

D.L. Serventy Medal 1993: Citation

HUGH ALASTAIR FORD

Hugh Ford was enticed to Australia in 1973 to study the ecology and behaviour of coexisting honeyeaters. Australian ornithology and ornithologists have benefited ever since. After completing post-doctoral research in Adelaide, Hugh secured a lectureship at the University of New England and embarked on an outstanding research and teaching career. He has used quantitative, descriptive and experimental approaches to study the ecology of a wide range of woodland birds. Community organisation, population ecology, social behaviour, movements, and relationships between birds and plants have all received attention. Keen to generate and test hypotheses, to challenge ecological theory and to speculate on the evolution and uniqueness of Australian birds, Hugh has published over 50 articles in refereed journals, contributed chapters in more than a dozen books, co-edited two books on the ecology of Australian birds (*The Dynamic Partnership: Birds and Plants in Southern Australia* and *Birds of Eucalypt Forests and Woodlands: Ecology, Conservation, Management*) and written the first bird ecology text (*Bird Ecology: An Australian Perspective*) that uses Australian birds extensively to illustrate current ecological theory. These publications provide a sound basis and direction for further studies.

More recently, Hugh has been concerned about the impact of habitat loss and fragmentation on the conservation of Australian fauna and flora. For the past decade, he has researched, promoted and raised public awareness of the need to conserve and manage remnant native vegetation in agricultural areas on the New England tablelands. These initiatives have been complemented by programs to re-establish native vegetation in some of the worst-affected areas.

Less conspicuous, but nonetheless equally important, has been his contribution to fostering and facilitating the training of the next generation of avian ecologists. As supervisor and mentor, he has generously acknowledged the contribution of students and others to his research initiatives, always willing to listen and initiate discussion, and able to promote positive aspects in the research of others. His supervisory skills have been adapted to suit and bring out the best in each of his graduate students. Little wonder that Hugh has already attracted and supervised some 30 graduate students in



avian ecology and pollination biology, not to mention examining the theses of many others.

Hugh's drive, determination, compassion and unequalled enthusiasm provides an excellent role model. Many former students now make substantial contributions to the conservation, management and study of Australian birds, and owe much of their success to his influence. Outside his immediate university environment, other researchers have benefited from Hugh's advice during his term (1981–85) as Editor of the *Emu* and from his 1987–1991 contribution as the RAOU's first Editor of the *Recent Ornithological Literature Supplement*.

Hugh Ford is leading Australian ornithology into the 21st century through his research and publications, his involvement with graduate students and his publicly expressed concern for the conservation and management of Australia's unique biota. Receipt of the D.L. Serventy medal is a fitting acknowledgement of his achievements.

D.C. Paton