

D. L. Serventy Medal 2014: Citation

RICHARD LOYN

The D. L. Serventy Medal is an award of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (now BirdLife Australia) that honours members who have made outstanding contributions to publication in the science of ornithology in the Australasian region.

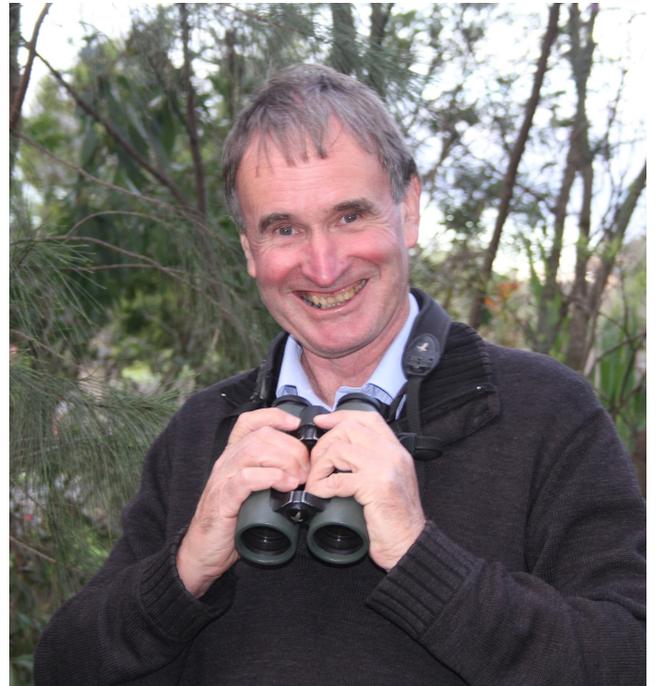
Many people know Richard Loyn as an ecologist with a passion for forests, wetlands and fire ecology, working with community groups, an enthusiastic public speaker and author, a pioneer of survey methods and long-term monitoring, and an avid traveller. But few know the full extent of his achievements in the 40 years since he arrived in Australia in 1973 after completing a degree at Cambridge University in the UK.

In 1973 Richard established a volunteer-based survey of waterbirds in Western Port (through the Bird Observers Club), which is now the longest-running survey of diverse waterbirds in a complex system in Australia.

His work for the Victorian Forests Commission explored the effects of logging in foothill forests, montane ash forests and riverine forests, and the effects of forest fragmentation in rural landscapes. His study on Bell Miners demonstrated the power of common forest birds to control insect infestations and showed that their aggressive territoriality was necessary to maintain their food supply (to the detriment of tree health in some cases): part of this study was published in *Science*. He also showed that similar processes operated with Noisy Miners in rural landscapes, and there has been a welcome recent revival of interest in these processes.

He developed the timed area-search method for counting bush-birds and popularised it as a tool for the Australian Bird Count, a project he helped develop for what was then the RAOU. His 20-min search (with variations) has become a widely used and popular survey method. Richard also worked as a consultant for a proposed industrial development at Point Wilson, documenting the importance of that area for Orange-bellied Parrots and waterbirds. He initiated interstate surveys and annual winter counts of OBPs, which confirmed that the species was indeed extremely rare, and revealed its breeding grounds in south-west Tasmania. This led to the formation of the OBP Recovery Team, and Richard continues as a member of that team.

In 1985 Richard accepted a senior position with the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI), the Victorian Government's leading ecological research unit. He led a review of the management of duck hunting in the State, working successfully with many stakeholders (and closely with the State government) to introduce new initiatives, including a compulsory video-based Waterfowl Identification Test for duck hunters, and an annual Summer Waterfowl Count (for long-term monitoring and to



locate Freckled Ducks and other birds that might need special protection). These initiatives reduced the impact of hunting in subsequent years.

Throughout a long career with the Arthur Rylah Institute, he has strongly influenced development of policy for forest management, fire management and biodiversity conservation. He initiated a series of studies on forest fauna to support the Regional Forest Agreement process, involving State and Commonwealth governments, using large forest owls as umbrella species, modelling their distributions based on purpose-designed nocturnal surveys. He and his team then worked with forest planners to select ~350 000 ha of forest to be given special protection for forest owls and the ecosystems on which they depend, adding 170 000 ha of State Forest to the reserve network.

In the 2000s Richard built a program of research on fauna in eucalypt plantations, and ran a series of monitoring and research projects for Melbourne Water on waterbirds at the famous Ramsar-listed Western Treatment Plant. He played a leading role in attracting more than \$2 million for fire ecology programs including one on fire, carbon and biodiversity. He managed one of those programs (a retrospective study in foothill forests), helped establish consortia for two others and involved amateur naturalists in some of these studies. Richard has helped pioneer the use of retrospective research ('space-for-time') and spatial modelling to help predict and understand the distributions of fauna, and give insights on how to manage them.

He has received the David Ashton award for biodiversity research on two occasions as principal scientist (for his work on forest owls and fauna of eucalypt plantations), and on two other occasions as a contributor (to research on box-ironbark forests and fire ecology). He has served on committees, delegations and expert groups and chaired the national Research Working Group 4 on native forest management.

He is a prolific contributor to ornithological literature, having published 170 peer-reviewed publications and reports, and co-supervised 30 Honours and postgraduate students (93%

success), including five completed doctorates. He has recently established a consultancy (Eco Insights); is a part-time Research Fellow at La Trobe University; holds honorary fellowships at the University of Melbourne and Charles Sturt University, serves on the committee of representatives of the International Ornithological Union and has accepted an editorial position for Australian Field Ornithology. His contribution to ornithology is extensive and he is a most worthy recipient of the 2014 Serventy Medal.

Judith Hoyle