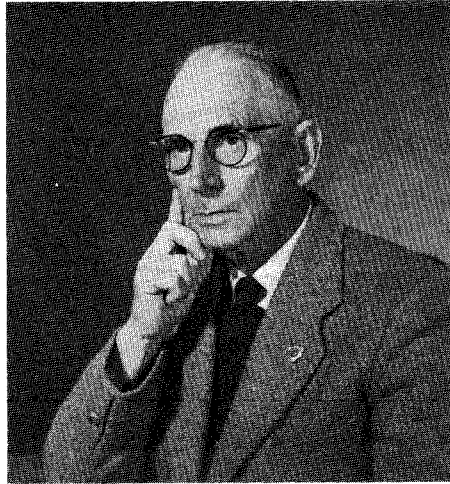


## OBITUARY



LESLIE GORDON CHANDLER

Leslie Gordon Chandler, who died on 25 January 1980 at Red Cliffs, Victoria, was born in Malvern, a suburb of Melbourne, on 11 January 1888. When he was very young the family moved to The Basin in the Dandenongs. Encouraged by his father, he learned to love the bush and on his way to and from school often walked several miles out of his way to explore and observe. After school he became apprenticed to a jeweller in Melbourne. Here he involved himself in the world of natural history, particularly birds, and by the age of eighteen was giving talks to schools.

He joined the Bird Observers Club in 1908 and the (Royal) Australasian Ornithologists Union in 1911. For a time he was secretary to the BOC, when it was limited to twenty-five members, and briefly held the position of Press Secretary to the RAOU. Like many early naturalists living in Victoria he was greatly influenced by Donald Macdonald and Charles Barrett and later worked with E. Brooke Nicholls and Arthur Mattingley. He enjoyed friendships with C. J. Dennis, J. K. Moir, Hal Gye, Web Gilbert and Tom Roberts.

He kept a diary regularly from 1900 and perfected shorthand to speed up recording his entries. The diary for 1907 mentions his first attempts at photography and this hobby was to remain with him all his life. During 1912-14 he made hundreds of leg-bands for the BOC and RAOU and participated in the first bird-banding projects ever undertaken in Australia: of Short-tailed Shearwaters on Phillip Island and White-faced Storm-Petrels on Mud Islands.

During the war he served with the Fifteenth Field Ambulance in Egypt, France and Belgium. In his pack he carried a copy of *The Sentimental Bloke* by C. J. Den-

nis. This was inscribed, in the author's favourite green ink: 'I hereby authorize Corporal L. G. Chandler to recite, eloquently [sic] or otherwise deliver or get off his chest any or all of the verses ever written by me when and where he damn well likes.' When Corporal Chandler was gassed at Villers Bretonneux he was invalided to England.

On his return to Australia he was too ill to continue in the jewellery trade; so he spent time in northern New South Wales and the Mallee, recovering his health. He had learnt to love the Mallee area before he left for the war, staying with Charles Thompson, the owner of Kulkyne Station. He spent many hours roaming the bush with the last member of the Kulkyne Tribe, an aboriginal princess called Mary Woorlong, and learned a great deal about the area from her. After her death, with fellow naturalists and members of the Mildura Historical Society he was instrumental in having a headstone erected to her memory in the Mildura Cemetery.

In 1921 he came to Red Cliffs as a soldier settler and lived in camps helping to clear the land. He had already published *Bush Charms* and his book for children, *Jacky the Butcher-bird*, was written by candle-light under canvas. In 1922 he formed the Nature Photographers Club of Australia, a travelling portfolio of prints for criticism, at times exchanging work with the equivalent club in England. In 1931 he married Ivy Henshall and settled on the block of land he had worked up from virgin bush to a vineyard. He sold this in 1956 and moved to Red Cliffs where he remained for the rest of his life.

With others he worked tirelessly to have the Hattah-

Kulkyne area declared a national park and was rewarded in 1960 when this was achieved. In 1949, with the late Reverend C. L. Lang, he formed the Sunraysia Naturalists' Club (now the Sunraysia Naturalists' Research Trust) and was variously its President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor. In recognition of his work he was made a Life Member. He was also a foundation member of the Mildura Historical Society.

Whenever he could he spent time in the field, at times for days on end. He published hundreds of articles and photographs in journals, magazines and papers such as *Age*, *Argus*, *Australasian*, *Wildlife*, *Leader*, *Sydney Mail*, *Emu*, *Walkabout* and the *Victorian School Paper*. He became the nature correspondent for the *Sunraysia Daily* and contributed articles under the pseudonym of 'Oriole'. He was offered a permanent position on this paper but declined, preferring to be free to 'go bush' whenever he could. In addition to his writing he gave

many talks, illustrated by his slides. Throughout his life he received many awards for the excellence of his photography, examples of which were exhibited in Japan, the USA and at the Royal Photographic Society in London. In 1961 to mark his contribution to ornithology and his fifty years of membership of the RAOU he was honoured with an Honorary Life Membership. At his death he had completed the remarkable record of almost seventy years as a member.

A tall spare man he was quiet, silent unless with a kindred spirit, and then it was difficult to stop him! Courteous, kindly and with a great sense of humour he will be remembered for his great love of nature and his efforts in its preservation.

Further biographical and bibliographical notes, including additions and emendations to his entry (p. 128) in H. M. Whittell's *The Literature of Australian Birds*, are held in the RAOU Archives.

Tess Kloot

I regret that in previous years I have failed to thank those who have helped me by refereeing typescripts. I must now put this right by thanking the following people for their help during the past twelve years; many of them have repeatedly reviewed papers. Perhaps I have forgotten some names and, if so, I apologize.

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Ed.