

DAVID GEORGE MEDWAY (1939-2013)

The recent passing of David George Medway of New Plymouth brings to a close one of the more specialist careers of amateur ornithology in New Zealand. Professionally David was a Solicitor and completed his Law Degree at Victoria, Wellington, while working at the Supreme Court. After 6 years he moved back to New Plymouth and joined a legal firm.

While still a college student he was active in the Taranaki Alpine Club and spent a lot of time on Mt Egmont and the surrounding area. In addition to climbing he had a keen interest in botany as well as birds. At that time he was also keen on caving and belonged to a local club; through this he developed a keen interest in Paleornithology.

David's interest in bird study had begun while he was still a schoolboy (he joined the Society in 1955 while still at school) when he began banding silvereyes. He made contact with the Society at that time to be able to correspond with others who were also banding them.

David was active regionally and nationally. He was the Society's Regional Representative in Taranaki for 2 extended periods: 1965-1973 and 1981-2000. He was the Society's representative in 1999-2004. During this period he was instrumental in coordinating the updating of outstanding records which had been allowed to stagnate and ensuring that submissions were responded to in a timely fashion.

David served on the Council from 1998-2007 serving as the President from 2000-2006. During his time as president the Society developed its forward looking ideas for furthering the Society.

As a Solicitor he also applied his legal skills to the Society's Constitution. This was a major undertaking that required much skilful negotiation over an extended period, eventually leading to its adoption without dissent in 2004.

In 2012 the Society awarded David a Robert Falla Memorial Award in recognition of his extended service to the Society and Ornithology.

His real passion however was unravelling and interpreting the Ornithology of the voyages of James Cook. As a result over his career David

produced an outstanding research and publication record of those times when the discovery of New Zealand birds was in its infancy. Not content with obtaining data from journals and museums David travelled widely to support his research, with trips to Europe, French Polynesia, Hawaii and Australia. As a result of his meticulous research into that ornithological history he achieved the distinction of being elected as a fellow of the Linnean Society of London in November 1978. This is an honour that is very rarely granted to amateur ornithologists.

David was engaged in current conservation challenges of the day, both nationally and locally. He served on the National Parks & Reserves Authority from 1968-1981 and the Fauna Protection Advisory Council and he maintained a role as the Honorary Consultant in Historical Ornithology to the Alexander Turnbull Library. He was also an Executive Board Member and Councillor of the Royal Forest & Bird Society, as well as the President of the Taranaki branch of Forest & Bird.

David was a local community with long standing commitments to the Taranaki Museum where he served as President for some time in the 1980s. As his home backed onto Pukekura Park and he was constantly wandering the grounds checking birds and the plants, he eventually became involved with the Friends of Pukekura Park. His contributions there included improving understanding of the history of the park. He eventually became the President in 2009.

In whatever David brought to the Society, reviewing branch meeting minutes, a paper for publication, or identifying specimens, David was always meticulous in his consideration of the facts.

David's publication record speaks for itself. Over his career he published 3 books as sole author, 178 journal articles, mostly in Notornis but also in Australian journals, and an additional 33 short notes. He contributed to 7 book chapters and wrote several additional published reports on the natural history of Taranaki.

BRUCE MCKINLAY
97 Tomahawk Road, Dunedin

DAVID LAWRIE
52 Mill Road, Pukekohe

List of publications by David Medway in Notornis and Southern Bird

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