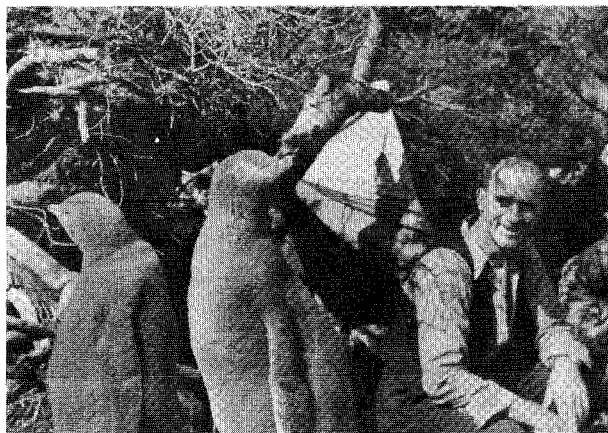


OBITUARY

LAUNCELOT ERIC RICHDALE, O.B.E.
(1900-1983)



Dr L.E. Richdale, noted New Zealand ornithologist, died on 19 December 1983 in his 84th year. He made his name by long-term studies of penguins and petrels in southern New Zealand and by his highly successful efforts in gaining protection for an embryo colony of Royal Albatrosses at Taiaroa Head, Otago. His earlier publications earned him a D.Sc. from the University of New Zealand in 1952; his services to ornithology were recognised by an O.B.E. in 1982.

Lance Richdale was born at Marton in the North Island, educated in Wanganui, and obtained a teaching qualification before going to Hawkesbury Agricultural College near Sydney and returning with its diploma late in 1922. He then became a teacher and in 1928 was appointed as itinerant Agricultural Instructor to the Otago Education Board, based in Dunedin. He specialised in natural history and toured town and country schools, instructing, advising and encouraging teachers and pupils in nature study, agricultural biology and horticulture. He remained at this post until retirement as Senior Instructor in 1960 but was given leave to pursue his research overseas, first as a Fulbright Fellow at Cornell University (1950-51) then as a Nuffield Research Fellow at the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford, where he worked under David Lack (1952-55). After retirement he worked, again as a Nuffield Fellow, at the Zoological Society of London (1960-63).

During these visits he wrote his two major books — 'Sexual Behavior in Penguins' (University of Kansas

Press, 1951) and 'A population study of penguins' (Clarendon Press, 1957). His stay in London resulted in important papers, synthesising his earlier work on petrels — 'Biology of the Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*' (*Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond.*, 1953, 141 (1): 1-117 and 'Biology of the birds of Whero Island' (*Trans. Zool. Soc. Lond.*, 1965, 31: 1-155).

He was an RAOU member for many years and most of his early papers appeared in *The Emu*. Between his first paper 'A Royal Albatross nesting on the Otago Peninsula, New Zealand' (*Emu* 38: 467-88, 1939) and 1950 he contributed 13 articles to our journal, eight of them substantial, his last being 'Further Notes on the Erect-Crested Penguin' (*Emu* 49: 153-66, 1950). Indeed, his very last publication, an abstract of a joint paper with C.J.R. Robertson, read to the XVI IOC at Canberra, appeared in *Emu* 74 (Suppl.): 292 (1975). Other early papers appeared in *Trans. Roy. Soc. N.Z.* and many popular articles in his *Wild Life Series* were published privately; others appeared in the *N.Z. Listener* and *National Education*. Later he established a serial 'Biological Monographs' (4 vols.) for results of his research.

In later years he wrote mainly for British and U.S. bird journals (*Ibis*, *Condor*, *Auk*, *Wilson Bulletin*, *Bird Banding*), apart from his main review papers published by the *Zoological Society of London* (1963-65). A bibliography will appear in the *Proceedings* (vol. 112) of the Royal Society of New Zealand (of which he was a

Fellow).

Richdale was a tremendous worker, both in the field and office, overcoming many obstacles, logistical and practical — for example, at first he had to make all his own bands. His international reputation stemmed from his long-term researches which allowed him to examine aspects of breeding biology such as the effects of age on nesting success, egg size, chick growth and survival, that could only be evaluated from data derived from large samples of marked birds studied over long periods. His investigation of the Yellow-eyed Penguin, for example, lasted 18 years.

Apart from his early stay at Hawkesbury College, Richdale made several short visits to Australia on his way to and from Europe and North America. During

one such visit in June 1953 he was taken on a tour of the south-west by Dom Serventy, meeting, among others, Angus Robinson and H.M. Whittell. On a later visit in 1960 Klaus Immelmann recalls being on a field trip inland (again with Dr. Serventy) when Richdale pointed out that while all three belonged to the Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft, he and D.L.S. were the only two corresponding members of that society in the southern hemisphere!

Lance Richdale is survived by his wife, Agnes, whom he married in 1933. They had no children. We offer her our deep sympathy and best wishes for continued good health.

Charles Fleming; John Warham.