

A TRIBUTE TO TWO LATE MEMBERS

ALFRED GEORGE EDQUIST 1873-1966

By J. B. CLELAND

A. G. Edquist, who died at the age of 92 on October 1, 1966 was a good naturalist who gave the Department of Education, and the State as a whole valuable service over many years in directing Nature Study in our schools. He was born at Talbot, Victoria, on December 23, 1873. He began his long career with the Department in 1889 as a pupil teacher at the Hindmarsh School. His appointment to Kadina in 1895 and later to other country schools aroused his interest in natural history and agriculture. In 1907, with W. J. Adey, he was sent to Melbourne to spend a year under the Director of Education there learning the principles of the then New Education Theory which included Nature Study. This he was responsible for introducing to the schools. In 1921 he was appointed to the Teachers College and in 1928 became the first Inspector of Elementary Agriculture in the Department, being also responsible for the teaching of Nature Study. He retired in 1939. He wrote two books, *Elementary Agriculture and Horticulture* Adelaide, 1924 and *The Mosquito or Gnat* Adelaide, 1921. He joined our Association in 1910 and was a member of our Royal Society and its Field Naturalists Section, and the South Australian Anthropological and Astronomical Societies. He must have led many a child to take an interest in Natural History which has a high educational value. His help on Field Naturalists' excursions was welcome and much appreciated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Protected Native Birds of South Australia* (compiled by A. Duffield with introduction and illustrations by Alfred George Edquist) Adelaide, 1910.
- 'Our Feathered Friends. Protected Native Birds,' *Journal Dept. Agriculture, South Aust.*, April, May, June and July, 1911.
- 'Vitality of Seeds,' *Transaction of the Royal Society of South Australia*, 43, 1918, pp. 5-10.
- 'Notes on the Vitality of the Soursop,' *S.A. Naturalist*, 1, 1919, pp. 4-5.
- 'Petrified Remains of Trees,' *ibid*, 1920, pp. 24-25.
- 'Nature's Way,' *ibid*, 1920, pp. 60-61.
- The Mosquito or Gnat*, Adelaide, 1921.
- 'Junior Ornithologists,' *S.A. Ornith.*, 6, 1922, pp. 171-174.

Elementary Agriculture and Horticulture, Adelaide, 1924.

'Nutrition in Relation to Aquatic Animals,' *S.A. Naturalist*, 11, 1930, pp. 61-63.

[Mr Edquist joined the South Australian Ornithological Association in 1910, was elected Vice-President in 1916 and President in 1917. He was on the Editorial Committee from 1918-1926 and was elected an Honorary Member in 1964.

Further notes on Mr Edquist were published in the *S.A.O.A. Newsletter*, June 1964, pp. 2 and 7, on the occasion of his being elected an Honorary Member. — Ed.]

J. NEIL MCGILP, O.B.E. 1881-1963

By G. B. RAGLESS

After a short illness J. Neil McGilp died at the age of 81 years on October 12, 1963, thus reducing the ranks of men of his era in South Australia to Sir John Cleland, Mr. F. E. Parsons and Mr. F. M. Angel. All can be ranked among the best Ornithologists in the State and received life membership for services rendered to the Association.

In his book "Flying Fox and Drifting Sand" Francis Ratcliffe has this to say about him, "I have been extraordinarily lucky in my travelling companions in the outback, and none has been more pleasant than Mr. Neil McGilp of the South Australian Pastoral Board. Even without our common interest in birds, I should have delighted in his company. What I liked about him was his unpatronizing nature. He merely set out to help me as much as he possibly could, putting his knowledge at the disposal of my inexperience, and never ramming his opinions down my throat as many others in his position would have done—and probably I should have done, had our roles been reversed."

My own opinion of him gleaned during many field outings in his company was exactly the same. On one of our first trips he came along with a large paper bag containing the kitchen scraps from the McGilp home. While we were moving through the scrub he commenced to scatter the scraps as we walked. Noticing my puzzled look he said, "Well, if we are to rob them surely we can feed them." This action struck me so forcibly that it is one I have frequently followed, and others could well do the same.

Neil McGilp is probably best remembered for the part he played in recording the breeding of the Banded Stilt at Lake Callabonna late in 1930. Some facts are worth placing on record.

The first authentic eggs of the species were collected by Mrs. B. E. Carron of Kukerin at Lake Grace, Western Australia, during July 1930. It had always been expected that the eggs would have a resemblance to those of the White-headed Stilt or the Avocet, but when eggs from the Lake Grace colony sent to the S.A. Museum were of a quite different type, it created a feeling of uncertainty. The experts of the time were so dumb-founded that their doubts caused them to return the eggs. Mr. R. McKay, manager of Moolawatna Station, found evidence of nesting starting on December 29, 1930, and quickly despatched a telegram to Mr. McGilp, one of the owners, urging him to make a visit. Accompanied by Dr. Morgan, he arrived at the Station on January 10, and they were at first very disappointed when shown eggs similar to the previously discarded L. Grace specimens. Their doubts were dispelled when the manager produced a dead Banded Stilt to confirm his identification.

While on this visit, Mr. McGilp showed some eggs to a group of aborigines at the Station, who declared that some years previously they had feasted upon thousands of eggs of the same type at Lake Blanche. This indicates that this Lake is another so far unrecorded nesting sight, and like Lake Callabonna is difficult to approach. The Morgan-McGilp article is well illustrated, and I am in possession of a number of slides made from these prints, some of which were not published. One of these historic pictures is shown on page 54 of Breeden and Slater's

Birds of Australia.

When I called to see him in hospital a few days prior to his death, I told him about the then recent rediscovery of the Noisy Scrub Bird in Western Australia. His face showed the pleasure this news gave him, and he turned to me and said, "Some more rare birds will be reported if people get out and *work* hard enough."

I feel the above instances will show the positive thinking and broad outlook that he held.

I first met him in 1938 when I was staying at a station in the North and he called on

Pastoral Board business. He was held in very high esteem by the graziers and how fortunate several Ministers of Agriculture were to have such an efficient officer. He was one of the first to detect deterioration of the soils in the Murray Mallee areas by over-cropping with cereals. By encouraging the farmers to adopt new pasture methods and the carrying of more sheep his advice contributed to the present improvement.

He attended his first meeting of the Association as a visitor on September 27, 1918 and joined on April 25, 1919. In the following years he held the office of President and Secretary for several terms, and was Librarian for a number of years. He was elected an Honorary Member in 1955.

Sir John Cleland has written an admirable Obituary to his old friend in the *Emu*, Volume 63 Part 5, and touches on *many aspects* not covered in this tribute.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

In preparing a Bibliography of the late J. Neil McGilp, I was amazed at his output, and doubt if any other writer has written more papers for the *South Australian Ornithologist*. The first contribution was published in Volume III Pt. 8 (October 1918), and the last in Volume 22 Pt. 1 (March 1956).

The subject matter was varied, with a leaning towards the Cuckoo family and the species of the Interior of South Australia. In regard to the latter, we would have scanty knowledge of these birds without his writings. The late John Sutton was also a prolific writer, often covering subjects when McGilp and he were together in the field, notably trips made to Eyre Peninsula in 1924 and 1926.

He also contributed extensively to the *Emu*, the most valuable paper being "Birds of the Lake Frome District" published in Vol. XXII during 1923.

A complete bibliography to 1950 having been published in H. M. Whittell's *The Literature of Australian Birds* (1954) pp. 468-471, it would be superfluous to reproduce it here. Subsequent papers in the *South Australian Ornithologist* are—

- 1953. Notes on the Black-capped Sittella. 21 (1), 8-10.
- 1954. Feeding Habit of the Black-winged Currawong. 21 (2-3), 29.
- 1956. Notes on Cuckoos in South Australia. 22 (1), 9-12.