

PROFESSOR SIR JOHN BURTON CLELAND 1878-1971

By D. N. KRAEHENBUEHL

Professor Sir John Burton Cleland, whose death occurred on August 11, 1971, will undoubtedly be remembered as the most celebrated of all native-born South Australian naturalists. His contributions to medical science and natural history were outstanding; and the scope of his talents and variety of interests are revealed in his prolific writings.

Sir John Cleland, scion of an old Ayrshire family, was born on June 22, 1878, in Adelaide, son of William Lennox Cleland, Colonial Surgeon for South Australia, and his wife Matilda Laudor (nee Burton).

He was educated at Prince Alfred College and had a distinguished academic record at the University of Sydney, where he graduated MB, Ch.M. in 1900 and MD in 1902. Later in 1904-05 he was a Cancer Research Scholar at the London Hospital and was appointed Government Pathologist and Bacteriologist of Western Australia for the years 1906-09. He was principal Microbiologist for the Dept. of Public Health, New South Wales, 1913-19, and in 1920 returned to Adelaide where he was appointed

Professor of Pathology at the University of Adelaide.

There seems little doubt that John Cleland's natural history leanings were nurtured by his father, who was a foundation member of the Field Naturalists' Section of the Royal Society of South Australia, and Chairman in 1885-86. John Cleland often recounted how as a small boy of about six years old he was taken by his father on one of the Section's early excursions to the Mount Lofty Ranges.

At the age of fourteen he joined the Section, and remained a member of the Field Naturalists' Society of S.A. for a further 79 years—a remarkable record.

While residing in Sydney he was elected a member of the Royal Society of New South Wales in 1909, and was President in 1917-18 and Vice-President in 1918-20. On his return to South Australia he immediately renewed his links with scientific and natural history societies, and was Chairman of the Field Naturalists' Section in 1923-24. From 1922-38 he was an active member of the

Fauna and Flora Protection Committee along with his well known contemporaries, Dr. Charles Fenner, Edwin Ashby, J. Neil McGilp, J. Sutton, J. McConnell Black, Frank Angel, Captain S. A. White and H. H. Finlayson. Professor Cleland was Vice-President of the Royal Society of South Australia in 1926-27 and President in 1927-28 and 1940-41. He was awarded the Verco Medal in 1933.

The study of ornithology was dear to his heart, and he was elected a member of the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union in 1902, serving as President in 1935-36. In tribute to his past achievements he was made an Honorary Member in 1949. Between 1906 and 1920 he contributed a number of papers to the *Emu*, including the following: 1906—Birds of Kangaroo Island; 1908—Antics of the Southern Stone-Plover (*Burhinus grallarius*) and the "Waltzing Instinct" of Ostriches; 1910-1911—Examination of contents of Stomachs and Crops of Some Australian Birds; 1917—Destruction of Salmon by Cormorants; 1919—The Birds of Pilliga Scrub, New South Wales; 1920—Notes concerning the birds met with on Stradbroke Island, at Dalby, and on the Bunya Mountains.

He was most adept at unearthing early colonial bird records, and his Presidential Address to the R.A.O.U., "History of Ornithology in South Australia," which was published in volumes 36 and 37 of the *Emu*, remains the standard work on this subject.

John Cleland joined the South Australian Ornithological Association on March 26, 1920, and was President on five occasions, 1922-23, 1928-29, 1933-34, 1938-39 and 1944-46. He was made an Honorary Member on March 31, 1961. He wrote many articles and short notes for the *South Australian Ornithologist*, relating mainly to bird species seen or collected on his field excursions to most areas of the State, including the Mount Lofty Ranges, Flinders Ranges, Yorke Peninsula, Eyre Peninsula, Far West, Far North, and Kangaroo Island. He also travelled extensively in Central Australia. H. M. Whittell, in *The Literature of Australian Birds (1954)*, lists over 70 articles by Cleland in the *South Australian Ornithologist* up to 1948. Professor Cleland was a member of the Editorial Committee of the Association for 30 years.

Although his contributions to the study of ornithology were praiseworthy, it was in the field of botany that he excelled. A significant number of native plants in South Australia are named after him; and the Genus *Clelandia* has one representative, *Clelandia convallis*, found only in Wilpena Pound. The Cleland plant collections held at the State Herbarium, South Australia, are representative of most species known to occur in this State.

One of his favourite tricks, while motoring back from a field excursion, was to sit on his small heap of pressed plants. This of course was a ready made press of expediency until he reached home!

On field excursions he was ever ready to help the budding young naturalist, always suggesting a wealth of ideas and projects which could be pursued. In fact it was his unfailing courtesy and his complete willingness to talk to people at all times, no matter what their station in life, which made him so popular. His close friend Dr. Eric Sims was a great comfort to him when his sight began to fail, and together they searched localities for rare plants. Right up to the age of about 90, Sir John was still donating plant collections to the Herbarium.

Sir John was a member for many years of the South Australian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society, to which he contributed several papers. He was Deputy Chairman of the Aborigines Protection Board, and participated in field trips to the Nepabunna Mission in the Flinders Ranges, to the remote Musgrave, Mann and Everard Ranges in the Far North West of South Australia, and to Central Australia.

In 1949 he was made a C.B.E., for his services to medicine, and he was knighted in 1964. Another award came his way in 1952, with the presentation of the Australian Natural History Medallion.

South Australia owes much to Sir John Cleland for his work with National Parks. In the days when conservation was an almost unheard word, he helped to originate the idea of the need for more reserves in South Australia. He was a close confidant of Sir Thomas Playford, the then Premier of South Australia; and this close relationship must have helped pave the way towards the acquisition of land for National Parks in South Australia. Sir John was Deputy Chairman, 1931-1936, and Chairman, 1936-

65, of the S.A. National Parks and Wildlife Reserves. Cleland National Park at Mount Lofty is named after him.

Sir John Cleland is survived by a son Mr. W. P. Cleland, surgeon, of London, and four daughters, Dr. J. P. Horan, Mrs. J. A. LaNauze, Mrs. A. M. Simpson and Mrs. Joan Paton, a member of this Association, who retains her father's avid interest in the study of ornithology.

PUBLICATIONS

- 1905: *The Ancient Family of Cleland*. London.
- 1934: *Toadstools and Mushrooms and other Larger Fungi of South Australia, Pt. 1*. (Govt. Printer, Adelaide).
- 1935: *Ibid., Pt. 2*.
- 1963: *Acceptable Words Gathered from the Readings of J. B. Cleland*. Adelaide.
- 1966: In Cotton, 1966, *Aboriginal Man in South and Central Australia* (Govt. Printer, Adelaide), Part. 1, Chapter 5: Ecology, Environment and Diseases.
- 1931: Cleland, J. B., and Howchin, W, *Geological and Botanical Notes on the Victor Harbour District*. (Field Naturalists' Section of the Royal Society, Publication No. 2. Adelaide).
- 1935: Cleland, J. B., and Fenner C., *Botany and Geology of the Coast from Outer Harbour to Sellicks Beach* (Field Naturalists' Section of the Royal Society, Publication No. 3, Adelaide).
- 1965: Cleland, J. B., and Southcott, R. V., *Injuries to Man from Marine Invertebrates in the Australian Region*. Canberra.
- 1930: Notes on the Birds of Central Australia, *10*, 160-166.
- 1934: Birds seen between Oodnadatta and the Musgrave Ranges, S.A., *12*, 149-153.
- 1936: Notes on Birds in Central Australia between Alice Springs and Ayers Rock, *13*, 191-196.
- 1938: Birds noted in the North Flinders Ranges in May, 1937, *14*, 115-117.
- 1942: Further notes on Early Ornithology in South Australia, *16*, 8-9, 21, 26, 35.
- 1946: References to South Australian Birds by George French Angas in 1847, *17*, 84-86.
- Articles published after 1948:
- 1952: The Dispersal of Plants by Birds, *20*, 72-77.
- 1954: Obituary. Captain S. A. White (1870-1954), *21*, 34.
- 1955: Fork-Tailed Swifts At Encounter Bay, *21*, 54.
- 1968: Alfred George Edquist (1873-1966), *25*, 53.
- 1969a: Lorikeets and the Flowering of Eucalypts, *25*, 106-107.
- 1969b: Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus medeoloides*) and its Spread by Birds, *25*, 110.
- 1969c: Pine seeds Distributed by Birds, *25*, 112.
- 1968: J. B. Cleland and E. B. Sims, food of the Glossy Black Cockatoo, *25*, 47, 52.

Also innumerable articles and papers in the following magazines and journals: *Australian Medical Congress Transactions, Australian Association for the Advancement of Science, Australian Avian Record, Journal and Proceedings Royal Australian Historical Society, Emu, South Australian Naturalist, Victorian Naturalist, Nature, Oceania, Proceedings Linnæan Society New South Wales, South Australian Ornithologist, Records of the South Australian Museum, Transactions and Proceedings Royal Society New South Wales, New South Wales Agriculture Department Science Bulletin, Transactions Royal Society South Australia, Western Australia Natural History Society, Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, (South Australian Branch).*

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOUTH AUST. ORNITHOLOGIST

- The following selection of major papers, published up to 1948, has been compiled from H. M. Whittell, *The Literature of Australian Birds*.
- 1923: Notes on the Birds of Ooldea, *7*, 17-21.
- 1924: The Birds of the Encounter Bay District, *7*, 172-184.
- 1925: Notes on the Birds of the Port Lincoln District, *8*, 46-50.
- 1926: Notes on the Birds of Kangaroo Island, *8*, 233-239.
- 1929: Birds seen between Penong (West Coast) and Adelaide, via Koonibba, Wirrula, Yardea and Port Augusta, *10*, 124-129.