

OBITUARY: MARK BONNIN

The death of Dr Mark Bonnin on 5 March 1991, at the age of 78 years, was a sad loss. He will be remembered, however, for his lifetime dedication to the study of all aspects of bird life, and his achievements will last for long in the history of South Australian ornithology.

From an early age he spent many vacations on Yorke Peninsula, and came under the influence of such experienced ornithologists as Cleland, McGilp, Lendon, Morgan, Rix and Brummitt. The enthusiasm they engendered never left him, despite a long and busy professional life. In his early twenties he became interested in bird skins and expert in their preparation. He was loath to collect in the conventional manner, however, and relied to a large extent on road kills and derelicts, plus the corpses so kindly sent to him by his many friends. Mark's large collection is now in the South Australian Museum, thus his name will live long in that fine institution.

Mark Bonnin joined the South Australian Ornithological Association in those early days when meetings were held in the Royal Society's rooms on North Terrace. He was a regular contributor of bird observations, and even at this early stage began writing short articles for the association's journal. It was my privilege to be with him in the field during some of the work he carried out at that time. Landing on Baudin Rocks, in January 1968, for Mark to photograph the first Bridled Terns recorded breeding in South Australia was a great day, perhaps exceeded in mal de mer by trips to the continental shelf off the South-East coast in search of the rich bird life of that area. However, we were sustained

by the knowledge that a safe return meant a good meal of crayfish — always a happy ending! Then there was the search for the Noisy Scrub-bird at Two People Bay near Albany in Western Australia. As always the bird proved difficult to locate — and Mark never forgot the two ticks that attached themselves to the skin of his neck while he was crawling through the bushes.

Mark Bonnin served the SAOA long and well, and became President in 1982, a position he held until 1985. He was made an Honorary Life Member in 1988. He was also a Foundation Member, Honorary Life Member and, for a time, President of the Adelaide Ornithologists Club. Perhaps his main achievement, however, was the establishment of the National Parks Foundation of South Australia, of which he was the Founding President. This far-sightedness by Mark has already produced some tangible results with the acquisition and development of nature reserves, ensuring that many areas of forest and other habitats will be preserved in perpetuity. The Foundation is now a thriving organisation, and Mark's public service in the field of conservation, and in that of medicine, was acknowledged by admission to the Order of Australia in 1989.

Mark Bonnin's death will leave a large gap in the ornithological affairs of South Australia, but his passing is tempered by the many happy memories that remain of a good friend and teacher to his many colleagues. His widow, Avis, was a life-long support to him, and the SAOA extends its sympathy to her and their children.

ROGER ANGOVE