

OBITUARY: ALLEN FREDERICK COOPER LASHMAR 1917 - 1993

Allen Lashmar was known affectionately to many as the father of ornithology on Kangaroo Island. He died in Flinders Medical Centre on Christmas Day 1993, after a protracted battle with a kidney condition that had kept him housebound for the last five years of his life. Even during those years he continued his interest in birds by working on papers and encouraging others in ornithological pursuits.

Allen's interest in birds apparently began as a boy when he started to collect sparrows for the bounty of two pence per dozen for eggs and three pence per dozen for heads. In secondary school in Adelaide, he was given a box of unlabelled eggs. He took this box to the SA Museum and asked to see 'the professor of birds'.

This was the first of several contacts with the then curator, John Sutton who encouraged and directed his enthusiasm, stressing the need to keep accurate records of his observations and collections. Through him Allen joined the SAOA in 1934. By going along to association meetings as a young man he met many other bird observers. He built up a valuable collection of Kangaroo Island bird eggs which he lodged with the SA Museum in the late 1960s.

Allen was orderly and meticulous by nature and he heeded the advice given in those early years about record keeping by Sutton, and by Joan Cleland (Paton) and Neil McGilp in particular. The results are invaluable bird observation notes for Kangaroo Island covering many decades.

Between January 1938 and August 1950, Allen kept a diary of his observations. Later all his observations and those reported to him were meticulously recorded on a card file system that now forms an invaluable record of the changing status of some species and a base record for many others on Kangaroo Island.

Over the years Allen regularly contributed observation notes to *The South Australian Ornithologist*. He also published three papers in *Corella*. One dealt with his work on Silvereyes and the others summarised his albatross banding studies between 1971 and 1986. He was also co-author of a substantial manuscript currently in preparation on the White-bellied Sea-Eagle in South Australia.

Since 1966 Allen banded some 7730 birds of 77 species including 4379 Silvereyes. He recorded 29 previously unrecorded species for the island.

Apart from war service in the Middle East and New Guinea (he enlisted 12 days after marrying in 1940), Allen spend all his working life as a farmer on land in the Antechamber Bay area that had been in the Lashmar family since 1858. His ancestors were among

the earliest settlers on eastern Kangaroo Island. His great-great-grandfather, Thomas Young Lashmar, apparently travelled overland to South Australia from the Victorian goldfields, set up on Thistle Island in 1843 and later on Flinders Island, to supply fresh meat to the whaling and sealing ships. He secured extensive pastoral leases on Kangaroo Island, much of which is still in the Lashmar family.

For his contribution to ornithology, Allen was awarded a Telecom Advance Australia Medal in 1986. In 1989, Richard Schodde, in a review of the Western Whipbird, named the Kangaroo Island subspecies *Psophodes nigrogularis lashmari*. As part of the National Parks centenary celebrations in 1991, Allen was one of 100 past and living South Australians who were recognised for their individual contribution to conservation in the state.

Allen took an active interest in community affairs. He was a district councillor for two terms. He was also a founding member of the Kangaroo Island NPWS Consultative Committee, serving until declining health forced his retirement in 1989. His short discussion paper to that committee in 1984: 'The Hooded Plover, does it have a future?' prompted our joint six year study of that species. We captured and individually colour banded 265 plovers, and have around 2500 recapture notes and another manuscript in preparation.

Allen saw the dedication of Lashmar Conservation Park at Antechamber Bay just before his hospitalisation. The park was part of the original Lashmar holding and Allen's wish was that it should never be cleared.

From a personal perspective: my first field trip with Allen was in 1983, into a remote and rugged section of Kangaroo Island's south coast. Apart from the birding, we were to check on a reported whale stranding. We hiked along the coast for 5 km, over soft sandy beaches, up and over rocky headlands. On the way back, each of us carried a 2 m long jawbone from the whale. I struggled along behind this wiry 65-year-old striding out in front, thinking so this is what legends are made of.

Allen always got so much pleasure from nature it was an inspiration to be with him. I learned so much in those years. Not only about Sea-Eagles and Hooded Plovers, but about the lessons of life: about the rewards of patience and endurance; about the value and consistency of simple straightforward honesty; how to suffer pain with dignity; about the folly of pretence; what to record and what to simply remember.

TERRY DENNIS