

OBITUARY: CECIL E. RIX, AM
1905–1997

I first met Cecil in 1968 when I began employment with the National Parks Commission. Cecil was one of 15 Commissioners whose voluntary service oversaw the National Parks system. I soon came to admire this man whose dedication to conservation was all embracing.

This near lifelong passion began at age six when Cecil used to play in the reed beds of the River Torrens near Henley Beach. He was greatly influenced by the late Captain Samuel White, a noted ornithologist, who had taken a prominent part in the successful quest for Flinders Chase National Park in 1919. Cecil was given a book on ornithology (*An Australian Bird Book* by J.A. Leach, 1911) by a relative for his 6th birthday, and he kept that book all his life.

Cecil Rix became a member of the SAOA in 1935 and served on the Committee in several capacities in the 1940s, including President in 1941–2. He also held the position of Honorary Auditor in the late 1950s and became a Life Member. Cecil was a regular contributor to the *South Australian Ornithologist* (Rix 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1942, 1943, 1945, 1947, 1954, 1973; Condon and Rix 1936; Terrill and Rix 1944) and his papers included major articles on the birds of South Australia and the Northern Territory (Rix 1970; Terrill and Rix 1950).

In his later years, Cecil was a founding member of and very active in the 'Adelaide Ornithologists' Club, which was founded in March 1960. He filled several positions on the Committee, including Vice-President, President and Editor, from the early 1960s until 1980. He was also a prominent speaker at meetings and contributor to the journal *Bird Talk*.

Cecil was a man of foresight as evidenced by the following words (from Rix 1943):

Much of the mallee country [between the Mt Lofty Ranges and the Murray River below Murray Bridge], particularly in the Hundred of Freeling, is uncleared. Owing to the nature of the soil and low rainfall, much of it is unsuitable for agriculture or pastoral purposes, for if cleared it would drift badly. It seems, therefore, that steps should be taken to reserve as large an area as possible to ensure the safety of the numerous forms of wild life at present found there. Many

of these, if not afforded such sanctuary, may soon become extinct.

The present generation owes this to posterity, for what is more depressing and more indicative of past thoughtlessness and improvidence than the caption 'Extinct. Formerly numerous at ...'?

Will not our children look askance at the vast expanses dotted with deserted homesteads, in the denuded marginal areas? Will they not rightly feel that they may have been denied, except in legend, a knowledge of a substantial part of their heritage? Progress is essential to the life of the nation, but in our progress let us not destroy all vestige of the Australia which, since it first became known to our forefathers, has been regarded, by scientist and layman alike, as a land of natural wonders.

Today that area has largely been cleared except for two small Conservation Parks—Monarto and Ferries McDonald.

In 1943 he proposed at an ornithological meeting that the S.A. Government be asked to set aside areas for National Parks, and he presented a map on which he had shaded in areas he believed ought to be declared Parks.

Today many areas he identified have become National (or Conservation) Parks. Just a few are Para Wirra, Sandy Creek, Innes, Spring Gully, Cape Gantheaume, Ngarkat, Hambidge, Hincks, Mt Remarkable, Coorong, Coffin Bay, Canunda, Cox's Scrub. In 1938 there were three National Parks in S.A., but after Cecil's enormous influence and foresight there were 109 Parks when he retired from the National Parks Commission in 1972. Today our 250 Parks reserves are the backbone of a huge eco-tourism industry in S.A.

Of the many parks that Cecil sought to be dedicated, I must tell you of Sandy Creek in 1962. It was a nasty hot day with a north wind and Cecil was working in the Barossa area. He drove down a narrow lane into some shady scrub to eat his lunch. At once he discovered the beautiful bushland to be a haven of numerous species of birds. A delight for Cecil. He sought to get Sandy Creek purchased as a Park, but treasury would not provide the money.

At the end of the year, the Minister of Lands, Mr Quirke, officially thanked Cecil on behalf of the Premier Tom Playford for all of his good

work during the year.

Cecil, never stuck for a quick reply, said, 'Tell Tom that if he wants to thank me he could buy Sandy Creek land for a national park.'

Next day, at a meeting of Cabinet, Mr Quirke passed on Cecil's words to the Premier. At 2 p.m. Cecil's phone rang. The caller said, 'Quirke here. We've bought your birds.'

After retirement, Cecil's love of the bush, and birds, continued. He, with two friends (Roger Angove and Mark Bonnin), made weekly visits to Sandy Creek where 108 species of birds were recorded and observed. And for a period of 40 years he visited wetlands at Penrice Saltfields and Buckland Park, north of Adelaide, keeping statistics on all sightings in all seasons. He has still lobbied to get that wetlands park, near Adelaide, until very recent times.

In the last few years, Cecil unveiled a plaque which names a Cecil Rix Zone at Sandy Creek Conservation Park. He also has a Cecil Rix seat overlooking the lake in Belair National Park where his ashes are to be placed.

In 1988 Cecil became a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to National Parks and ornithology. Cecil is known as the 'Modern Day Father of National Parks'. His vision for the future began 54 years ago, when bushland was plentiful. Now it is precious.

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—Based on a eulogy by DENE CORDES,
with references compiled by the editors.

CORRIGENDA

The following corrections relate to errors by the editors, for which we sincerely apologise and to amendments forwarded by the relevant authors which are based on information previously unavailable to us.

Vol. 32, Supplement, 'List of English and scientific bird names...' (inserted between pp. 102 and 103), p. iv, col. 1, Columbidae: Add '*' after Dove, Rock.

Vol. 32, p. vi, col. 2, Meliphagidae, Chat, White-fronted: Delete the first *h* in *Ephthianura*.

Vol. 32, p. 143, caption: Change 199 to 1996.

Vol. 32, p. 148, col. 2, para. 1, line 4: Change 47 to 45, and 38 to 30.

Vol. 32, p. 148, col. 2, para. (a), lines 1 and 5: Change 167 to 168, and 132 to 133.

Vol. 32, p. 149, Table 1: Change Pacific Black Duck entry for Atlas from - to 3. The entry for Wedge-

tailed Eagle, survey column, is unclear in some copies; the entry is 15.

Vol. 32, p. 150, Table 1: Delete the entry for Crested Tern.

Vol. 32, p. 156, col. 2, para. (b): In the heading, change 50 spp to 40 spp.; to the table, add 'Golden Whistler 13 1.3'.

Vol. 32, p. 157, col. 1, para. (d): Change 49 spp. to 59 spp.

Vol. 32, p. 159, Table 5: In the caption, change 'eight habitat groups' to 'eight habitats'. The headings for columns 2, 3 and 5 should be 'Habitats (number)', 'Total Species' and 'Final AR (species/visit)' respectively.

Vol. 32, Contents, Bird Notes: Add 'and Colin Rogers' after John Hatch.