

## **In Memoriam: Ian Cecil Robert Rowley, 1926–2009**

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## IN MEMORIAM: IAN CECIL ROBERT ROWLEY, 1926–2009

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Ian Cecil Robert Rowley was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 6 February 1926. He started college at Wellington College and then Cambridge University, but his education was interrupted by service in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946. He served in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve aboard supply ships and landing craft in the English Channel that supported allied troops preparing for the landing at Normandy, and he later worked aboard minesweepers. He resumed his university education after his military service, first in a business course. He immigrated to Australia in 1949, where he completed his formal education by earning a B.S. in Agricultural Sciences from the University of Melbourne in 1952.

Ian was interested in animals throughout his life. His specific interest in birds, which became a lifelong passion, began at 13 when he was introduced to Australian birds by Roy Wheeler. Ian's fascination with the behavior and ecology of Australian birds only grew after that. After university, in 1952, he took a position with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) and stayed with CSIRO until his retirement in 1991. His work at first consisted of research on how to control the introduced European Rabbit. Later, after he moved to Western Australia, he investigated the role of Galahs as agricultural pests. It was not until 1982 that his work on fairy-wrens, for which he is best known, became his official job—formally supported because of its relevance to the effects of fire on small passerines—though it occupied him throughout his career.

Ian conducted detailed studies on no less than six species: Superb, Splendid, Purple-crowned, Red-winged, White-winged, and Blue-breasted fairy-wrens. His study of Superb Fairy-wrens during the 1950s, conducted mostly in his spare time, was the first on a cooperatively breeding bird that involved marked individuals, and his focus on the study of the biology and behavior of known individuals dominated his research thereafter. Along with Michael Brooker and colleagues, Ian was also the first to discover that fairy-wrens are reproductively promiscuous despite their strong pair-bonds and, for the most part, lifelong social monogamy. The number of other accomplishments in Ian's career is impressive: detailed studies of Australian corvids (which led to the

description of two new species), marking techniques for parrots, the first detailed study of the White-winged Chough, and conservation studies of endangered parrots, to mention just a few.

Ian's contributions to ornithology did not go unnoticed in the scientific community. In 1979, he was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the AOU and a Fellow in the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union (RAOU). In 1991, he was awarded the inaugural Serventy Medal by the RAOU in recognition of his contributions to Australian ornithology and his mentorship of both professional and amateur ornithologists. Lastly, in 2005, he was awarded the W. Roy Wheeler Medallion by the Bird Observers Club of Australia.

Ian's service to the ornithology community in Australia and worldwide was as extensive as his specific research contributions. In 1953, he helped initiate the original bird-banding program in Australia, now the Australian Bird and Banding Scheme (the equivalent of the U.S. Geological Survey's Bird Banding Laboratory). He served as the editor of *Emu*, the journal of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union, from 1990 to 2000, as the Australian representative to the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) in 1974, and then from 1982 to 1991 on the Permanent Executive Council of the IOC.

Ian's curriculum vitae lists 112 publications, up to 2009, including three books: *Bird Life*, 1975; *Behavioural Ecology of the Galah in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia*, 1990; and *Fairy-wrens and Grasswrens*, with Eleanor Russell, 1997. He continued to publish 18 years after his retirement from CSIRO, and approximately a third of his publications, including *Fairy-wrens and Grasswrens*, came after retirement. Considering that Ian's formal education ended with a B.S. in Agricultural Sciences, the breadth and depth of his contributions to ornithology and behavioral ecology are remarkable.

Ian died on 29 May 2009 and is survived by his wife, Eleanor Russell. The community of scientific ornithologists has lost a great member, and many of us have lost a friend. He will be missed. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Eleanor Russell, Alan Brush, and the editorial staff of the journal *Emu* in preparing this memorial.