

## President's Message

Convention demands that a President should at some time during his term of office, communicate with the body of his members. So what should I say?

Having been privileged to be one of the small group which decided that there was a need for an independent bird banders' association in Australia, and having served as first editor of this Journal, it has given me considerable satisfaction to have seen the Association and its Journal enter their tenth year in a healthy state which augurs well for the future and which appears to justify our original decision to launch the Association.

Seeking a subject for this message, it seemed to me worthwhile to pause to consider why we are bird banders—quite a different question from "Why band birds?", because the answer to that question is simple, it is an essential tool for the study in depth of wild birds.

Each one of us has his or her own reasons for being a bird bander, and they will be different reasons, but basically bird banding is a hobby from which we derive interest and satisfaction sufficient to compensate for the discomforts and work involved—getting up early in the morning, and hours spent filling in schedules at night. For like any other worthwhile activity, bird banding imposes its own disciplines and restraints.

When the Australian Bird-banding Scheme was started by the CSIRO Wildlife Survey Section (as it was then) in 1953, this was done both to serve individual projects undertaken by the Wildlife Section, and to promote the study of Australian birds in general by encouraging amateur ornithologists to take up banding. I have no doubt that this has resulted in a substantial sharpening of the standard of bird study in Australia, and has done much for the image of Australian ornithology generally; as an amateur ornithologist myself, I believe that we should acknowledge our debt to the Division of Wildlife Research for providing the facilities of the ABBS, which has added a new dimension to our ornithological pursuits.

The Bird Banders' Association of Australia was founded by amateurs, and initially was essentially an association of amateurs, but we have always welcomed the support of professional ornithologists, some of whom have contributed



• *Dr A. M. Gwynn, President, 1971.*

much to the strength of the Association. With their help, our Journal has won a recognised place in the ornithological literature, and I confidently expect that it will continue to strengthen this position.

There are of course other facets to amateur banding, and one which appeals to me is its relation to conservation. The Banding Scheme has done much to promote a better understanding of scientific ornithology among amateur ornithologists, and hence to better communications between amateur and professional ornithologists. This process is a continuing one, and in the long run must lead to a better appreciation by the general population of the true nature of the issues involved in conservation. In other words amateur banding is potentially good public relations both for conservation and for bodies professionally involved in wildlife research because it helps to spread a closer and better informed interest in wildlife through the community as a whole.

Finally, I feel sure that almost all our members, amateur and professional alike, would admit to being motivated to some degree by an appreciation of and feeling for bird life, and for me at any rate ornithology is as much an aesthetic as a scientific pursuit. But bird banding adds an additional spice to this interest, and we may gain satisfaction from the knowledge that by our activity we are making a contribution, however small, to a better understanding of our native birds. Also, if our records are faithfully kept, they will remain as a permanent record of our activity, which will be available to future generations of ornithologists.