

OBITUARY

Dr GLEN MILTON STORR died peacefully in his Perth home on 26 June, 1990. With his passing Australia lost one of its foremost ornithologists and herpetologists. Glen was born in Adelaide, South Australia on 22 December, 1921. In 1939 he joined the South Australian Lands Department as a junior draftsman and cadet surveyor. He enlisted in the A.I.F. in 1942, serving as an artilleryman with the Second Ninth Field Regiment in Queensland and New Guinea in 1943–45.

After the war he returned to the Lands Department and became a Land Surveyor in 1947. In the same year he published his first papers on birds observed on southern Eyre Peninsula (*South Aust. Ornithol.* 18: 31–37 and 54). In August 1948, he arrived in Cooktown, northern Queensland, for a two-week holiday and stayed for almost a year studying the birds and plants. Data from this work was published in 1953 (*Emu* 53: 225–248).

In 1949, he returned to South Australia and through Herbert Condon, Curator of Birds in the South Australian Museum, he met Dr D. L. Serventy. He accompanied Dom to Bass Strait in the spring of 1952 for field work on the Short-tailed Shearwater. It was at that time that Glen decided to give up surveying for a career in biology. He enrolled at the University of Western Australia in 1953 and was awarded B.Sc. with first class honours in 1957 for research on the nutrition of the Rottneest Island quokka. He continued these investigations and obtained his Ph.D. in 1960. His thesis on 'Some field aspects of nutrition in *Setonix brachyurus*' was one of the landmark ecological studies on Rottneest Island. In 1962, he was appointed Assistant Curator of Vertebrates (birds, reptiles, amphibians and fishes) in the Western Australian Museum. On the return of the Curator (G. F. Mees) to the Netherlands in 1963, Glen was appointed Curator of Vertebrates. In 1965, the fish collection was removed from his care and he became Curator of Ornithology and Herpetology, a post he held until his retirement in 1986.

His main task in herpetology was to sort out the alpha taxonomy of Western Australian reptiles. He once commented that Gould knew more about Australian birds in 1860 than we know about Australian reptiles in 1960. His efforts in this field are rather staggering; he described three genera, 180 species and 50 subspecies of reptiles and his numerous revisions of Western Australian reptiles formed the basis for the four handbooks produced by him, L. A. Smith and myself on the lizards and snakes of Western Australia.

Glen's other major interest was avian faunistics. After a trip to the Northern Territory in 1964 he was unable to see whether his observations had extended ranges or breeding season etc. He then began to search the literature and unpublished notes of fieldworkers compiling notes on Northern Territory birds — their distribution, ecological status, abundance, habitat preferences, movements and taxonomy and published his list of Northern Territory birds in 1967 (revised in 1977). From this list ornithologists were able to determine where field work would be most rewarding and which of their observations were worthy of being

published. Between 1967 and 1972 he tackled Queensland, a State with a much richer fauna and a far more extensive literature. His list of Queensland birds was published in 1973 (revised in 1984). He then turned his efforts to Western Australia compiling thousands of pages of notes on birds of this state to produce his eight regional avifaunas: Birds of the Kimberley Division (1980); Birds of the Northeastern Interior (1981); Birds of the Pilbara Region (1984); Birds of the Gascoyne Region (1985); Birds of the Mid-eastern Interior (1985); Birds of the Southeastern Interior (1986); Birds of the Eucla Division (1987) and Birds of the South-west Division which was submitted just before his death.

A feature of Glen's work was his scholarship and meticulous attention to detail, which allowed him to amass huge amounts of data and synthesize it into a significant body of information. No species was included in his lists unless it was attested by a definite observation or by a record of a specimen; and in either event he needed to be satisfied that the bird had been correctly identified. He never wanted his work to be the final word on a subject. Rather he wanted it to be something to which others could add even if this meant a change in his interpretation. The end result of his labours is that Western Australia has a vast data bank of vetted information that will be used in a forthcoming handbook on the birds of Western Australia (a project we were working on together at the time of his death).

He joined the Australian Bird Study Association in 1982 and contributed two papers to the Seabird Island Series, the first Rottneest Island (No. 29 in *Aust. Bird Bander* 14(1), and Carnac Island (No. 111) co-authored with J. N. Dunlop in *Corella* 5(3). He used the journal extensively to extract data for his bird monographs.

Retirement in 1986 had little effect on his devotion to research and he continued working at the Museum three days a week, churning out paper after paper. In all he published over 200 scientific papers and books. Glen had a remarkable prescience for identifying scientific problems, and had a sense of pleasure at seeing other people tackle these problems especially those using modern techniques. He was well versed in Latin and Greek and an expert on taxonomic nomenclature.

Glen was a wonderful person to work for and with, demanding and precise, but always full of encouragement, dauntlessly efficient and tireless. This dedication and enthusiasm was to affect many, for he inspired and enriched the lives of a new generation of naturalists. All his work was marked by care and accuracy and he saw to it that others adopted the same approach. He was openly critical of sloppy work or careless observations especially those that found their way into the literature. His own work was frequently delayed through the amount of time he was willing to sacrifice in assisting others, so long as he knew that science would ultimately benefit. He was always extremely generous with his time and his encyclopedic knowledge.

Glen Storr's departure marks the end of an era in Australian Ornithology and Herpetology. Although he received little official recognition for his work, the legacy of his published contribution stands and future generations will recognize him as one of Australia's greatest natural historians and scientists.

R. E. Johnstone