

OBITUARY

Stephen James Wilson OAM (1912-2009)



Steve Wilson, his wife Nonie and H.R.H. Prince Charles during a banding outing to the Canberra Botanic Gardens in April, 1966.

Steve, who died peacefully on 13 September, will be fondly remembered by many members of the Australian Bird Study Association. In 1964 he played a leading role in the formation of the ACT Branch of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, which, in 1970, became the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG). He served both these organisations with distinction in many capacities, most notably as Editor of *Canberra Bird Notes* from April 1975 through to January 1981. He was elected a Life Member of COG in April 1981.

Steve Wilson provided a vast amount of expertise and time to the development of the Bird Banders Association of Australia, now the Australian Bird Study Association. He was a foundation member and was elected to the first Committee of the Association in 1964 and served until 1977. He held the position of Vice President from 1964 to 1965 and President from 1965 to 1966.

His lasting legacy to the Association will always be the Mist Net Service. In 1962, Steve set up the Central Bird Banding Association (CBBA) with the express purpose of importing and supplying mist nets to members of the Bird Banding Scheme. The initial finance for the CBBA was provided in the form of a generous loan of £140 from an anonymous bird bander. On 1 July 1963 the activities of the CBBA were merged with those of the Bird Banders Association of Australia as the Mist Net Service. Steve served as its Secretary from 1963 to 1974. During this time it was necessary for him to negotiate many political and bureaucratic hurdles to ensure that the Association

In 1962, before the formation of the ACT Branch of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, he became one of the foundation members of the Bird Banders' Association of Australia which, in 1976, was renamed the Australian Bird Study Association. He was President of the Association from January 1965 through to January 1966.

One of Steve's major projects was a banding study of the birds of New Chums Road in the Brindabella Range. Together with a small group of other local ornithologists he began this study in April 1961. Steve's work at New Chums Road set the standard for other studies of this type in Australia. Although he had to give up active participation in the study, work at this site continues to this day.

As well as birds Steve had an interest in other pursuits, most notably gardening, cacti and philately. As with birds, he threw himself wholeheartedly into these pursuits, being rewarded with both national and international recognition.

In 1998 Steve was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to ornithology and the community.

Steve was a devout Catholic and a Requiem Mass for the repose of his soul was celebrated in St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church at Kambah on 17 September. This was a fitting tribute to a man who, together with his wife, was largely responsible for raising \$120,000 for the parish and school by propagating and selling plants from his house and school fetes.

Steve leaves a family of four sons, Kevin, Brian, Brendan and Denis, 18 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren. His wife Nonie died in 2006.

David Purchase

was recognised as the sole importer and supplier of mist nets for research in Australia, as well as ensuring that the Mist Net Service was financially viable.

Steve published many papers in the Association's Journal, covering a range of material including plumage details of a number of bush birds and later, results of his banding studies in the Brindabella Ranges, ACT, particularly in respect to the Brown Thornbill and White-browed Scrubwren.

Even in his later years Steve was still writing and in 1999, with the help of his wife Nonie, he produced the *Birds of the ACT: two centuries of change* published by the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Steve will be sadly missed.

(A complete Obituary for Steve Wilson was published in the *Canberra Bird Notes* (2009) **34**:197-203.)

Alan Leishman