

## OBITUARY

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Maxwell James Spens-Black, well known as Max. Black, passed away at Rotorua on May 24, 1970, at the age of 85. He was born and brought up in Canterbury — he had memories of Laughing Owls — and served in World War 1 in France, where he was wounded, with the Canterbury Regiment. Latterly he was physically able to do only light work and he suffered much illness in his last years.

H.R.McK. had the privilege of enlisting him as a member of the O.S.N.Z., in rather peculiar circumstances. He was checking the nesting gulls behind the Ward Baths at Rotorua when forceful shouts of "leave the birds alone" came across the water from the back of the baths. To a white-coated man he waved his notebook and the man walked away. H.R.McK. said to an overseas man with him, "I must see that man." He said, in broken English, "I think that is a very angry man. I think we should not go near him." Well, they went, met Max. and made a firm friend. That was in 1947.

Widely read, he had a world knowledge, not only of birds, but of other animals, too, and of nature generally. He delighted in discussing such matters, greatly to the benefit of his listeners.

When on duty at the Ward Baths it was customary for him to have some ornithological reading at hand. He might for instance be found studying a checklist of the birds of South Africa and adding marginal comments, with special reference to New Zealand.

The home of Max. and Muriel, his wife, was always open to inquirers after knowledge of birds and for several years he was Regional Organiser for the Rotorua-Taupo Region. Even when his health had failed very seriously he was always glad to share his hobby.

Max. had a fault. Too modest by most peoples' standards, he was apt to "hide his light under a bushel," fearing to appear pendantic. However, he was not one of those soft people who "suffer fools gladly" (if such odd people really exist) and any hurt to the creatures of nature would raise his wrath. For those who had the privilege of knowing and working with Max., their memories will be respectful and affectionate.

Condolences are extended to his wife, who devotedly nursed him to the end, and to the daughters and their families.

— R.B.S., H.R.McK.