

SIR CHARLES FLEMING

By Several of His Friends

1. SOME TRIBUTES

Members of this Society will have been delighted at the recent honour bestowed on one of its founding members by the Sovereign's own hand on 28 February this year. This last distinction is one of many which Sir Charles has earned, so far, during his scientific career of approximately 40 years. As he is, among many other things, a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, Charles Fleming is probably our Society's most distinguished member. His knighthood was conferred on him because of his contribution to conservation; but like many other Fellows of the Royal Society, he has extraordinarily wide interests which include art and music, as well as science.

Sir Charles was President of the Society from 1948 to 1949, but has played an influential part in its history throughout the whole of his and its career. He published his first paper in the Society's journal, then *New Zealand Bird Notes*, in 1946, but by that time he had already published 15 other papers including, as his first three, the definitive paper of the birds of the Chatham Islands.



Photo: The Evening Post, Wellington, 31 December 1976: 4

In just less than 40 years, Sir Charles has published just under 400 papers of various kinds which means an average of about 10 a year, which sets a standard that could probably stand for a long time in any local equivalent of the Guinness Book of Records.

Many ornithologists will remember having been generously encouraged by Charles Fleming in their younger days and all of us would wish to congratulate him on his most recent distinction and a continuing long and productive career during his official retirement.

G. R. W.

It is a pleasure to record that Dr Charles Fleming, a foundation member of this Society, has been knighted by Her Majesty the Queen, "for services to Science and to Conservation." Sir Charles has given distinguished service in many fields: as a war-time coast-watcher in the lonely Auckland Islands, as an outstanding research scientist in both geology and zoology, as a very progressive president of the Royal Society of New Zealand, as a distinguished representative of New Zealand in science congresses around the world and, last but not least, as a tireless fighter for the conservation of New Zealand's endemic animals and plants.

His ornithological publications include the standard work on Chatham Island birds, the life history of Silver-eyes (a pioneer study involving the first major use in New Zealand of colour bands on wild birds), the phylogeny and taxonomy of petrels (especially prions, *Puffinus assimilis* and the Subgenus *Cookilaria*), a very detailed study of all the New Zealand tits and robins and, with Dr K. Wodzicki, a census of the Gannet (another pioneering work in which aerial photography was used to permit actual counting of breeding adults). These are only some of the highlights in a long series of important ornithological papers which, for Sir Charles, were but a spare time labour of love (as also is his important work on New Zealand cicadas).

His professional career has been in geology and, more particularly, but by no means exclusively, in palaeontology. This, however, is not the place to review his geological contributions except to say that they are wide-ranging and numerous, and that their quality has earned him the rare distinction of being made a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, the American Philosophical Society, and the Royal Society of New Zealand.

His mastery of both geology and zoology (and of other sciences, and of arts as well) permits Sir Charles to cross the conventional boundaries of scientific disciplines as, for instance, in his stimulating reviews of the geological history of New Zealand with reference to the origin and history of the fauna and flora. He has not only a rare

ability to synthesize data from many different fields, but also the courage to publish his current interpretations despite incomplete data; by such means does science progress.

The discovery and interpretation of new facts is obviously a joy for Sir Charles; no less evident is his appreciation of the beauty and uniqueness of the animals and plants he studies and of the communities in which they live. To appreciate such things is to wish that they be preserved for future generations to enjoy; Sir Charles has not merely wished this, but has generously devoted his time, energy and money to the cause. In the interests of conservation he crosses departmental frontiers as easily as he does the man-made boundaries between branches of science. Credit and help are freely given where deserved, but woe betided those who, through greed or incompetence, threaten the survival of New Zealand's endemic fauna and flora.

All will agree that Sir Charles has given exceptional service to science and to conservation, but he has not done it alone. Lady Fleming, herself a contributor to the early pages of this journal, has been an indispensable supporter, field companion, secretary, adviser, and home baker as well as serving the community in her own independent spheres of interest.

P. C. B.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to the Editor of *The Evening Post*, Wellington, for permission to reproduce the photograph of Sir Charles and Lady Fleming taken at Waikanae on 31 December 1976. As the *Post's* caption stated, "His T-shirt tells all."

E. W. D.



A G M 1977: A LATER REPORT RARE BIRDS COMMITTEE

The Rare Birds Committee has given further consideration to the reported breeding of the White-winged Black Tern in New Zealand by R. J. Pierce (*Notornis* 21 (2): 129-134; 1974). This report was originally considered while the Convener of the Committee was overseas. On his return, and after studying the photograph of the chick (not originally available to the Committee), he expressed the opinion that it was not the chick of any tern known to breed in New Zealand.

More recently the photograph was submitted to the British Museum (Natural History). Authorities there considered that the chick appeared to be that of a White-winged Black Tern.

Because of this the Committee considers that the record can be accepted as a positive breeding attempt producing a chick, although it appears that this did not survive to the flying stage.

F. C. KINSKY, Convener,
Rare Birds Committee

G. Stilwell, R. R. Sutton, T. C. L. & E. M. Symmes, R. N. Thomas, S. Towle, C. R. Veitch, M. Wallis, D. M. & P. S. Witter, J. Warham, P. Watkins, G. Watson, G. & J. Wells, R. W. Sheeler, A. Wright, E. & O. E.

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C. R. VEITCH, *Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, P.O. Box 2220, Auckland.*



A CORRECTION

In PCB's appreciation of Sir Charles and Lady Fleming (*Notornis* 24: 290; December 1977), reference was made, by way of a proof-reading lapse, to Lady Fleming's talents as a "home baker." Whereas this may be true in fact, what the writer intended was "home maker." We apologise for the confusion.

