

LETTER

The Editor,
Sir,

Dr L.E. Richdale

When I began working on Antarctic seabirds in 1954 the published papers of L. E. Richdale were of enormous significance. Today they are among the classics of ornithological literature and deserve to be more widely available. In the year of the 20th International Ornithological Congress something might have been done about them.

I met Dr Richdale briefly in London one summer afternoon in 1960. We walked in Regent's Park and talked albatrosses; ever after I looked forward to the day when I might visit the Otago Peninsula.

It happened last December. I was able to spend ten days where once he had spent so many solitary days and where he is appropriately remembered at the Albatross Centre. It was all brought alive for me by also being able to talk to Mr Stan Sharpe. TVNZ, too, has commemorated the Yellow-eyed Penguin work in its fine film *Colony Z*; its perceptive script and beautiful photography do justice to the man.

Only the Ornithological Society of New Zealand forgot. Dr Richdale died on 19 December 1983, but no obituary has appeared in *Notornis*. Since his death you have published nine other obituaries, all well within one year of decease. Ironically, one of them was for Sir Charles Fleming who had himself, in 1984, written an obituary of Richdale for the Royal Society of New Zealand; it was followed soon after by others in *Emu*, *Ibis* and *Auk*.

An outstanding New Zealand ornithologist has evidently become a non-person in the society of which he was a founder member. One can imagine the wry comment with which he would greet such news.

Yours faithfully,

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I would disagree that Richdale is a non-person to New Zealand ornithologists. As far as I am aware, no one has a grudge against him or has chosen to ignore or denigrate his work, which is often referred to in *Notornis* articles, particularly on albatrosses, prions, and the Yellow-eyed Penguin.

Having no obituary in *Notornis* does, I agree, make a poor impression. In 1984, when told of his death, I asked John Warham and Sir Charles Fleming for an obituary, but both were already committed to other journals. A third person promised to do the job, but nothing ever came forward.

I hope that the article in *A Flying Start* goes some way to showing that many New Zealanders are well aware of Lance Richdale's special talents and contribution to ornithology. — Ed.