

LETTERS

The Editor,
Sir,

SERVICE TO THE SOCIETY

A quarter of a century ago it was my pleasure, as Secretary-Treasurer, to acknowledge year after year a donation to the Society's funds from Miss B. McDougall. Although lists of donations received regrettably did not appear in *Notornis* from volumes 8 to 14 inclusive, I believe her generosity continued and recent years have shown she is still a regular contributor of increasing amounts. What devotion she has shown over the years to the welfare of the Society!

Another example is that of Dr R. A. Falla who is I think the only member who has served continuously on the Council since the foundation of the Society. I am sure all members will join me in congratulating these two members whose records of service stand unsurpassed in their respective fields.

J. M. CUNNINGHAM

Wellington
27 July 1972



The Editor,
Sir,

Mills, J. A. 1971. *The reliability of sight recoveries of banded Red-billed Gulls. The Australian Bird Bander* 9 (4): 83-84 (Department of Internal Affairs, Wildlife Publication No. 131)

The review by J.M.C. of this paper was most interesting and we can agree on the importance of checking the work. In some instances simple book-keeping checks are adequate, appropriate to dead material but often needs-be, other checks are required for live birds. This paper is one such check. More generally the accuracy of the data will determine the precision of the deductions.

My experiences may be relevant.

During the six years 1959-64 I recovered by sight more than 1700 Red-billed Gulls, and made six definite mistakes among the birds sighted, one of a bird handled, and one of a band found squashed into the road. The first six mistakes were of three types; simple numerical slips (Hartree, 1952: 5-10) such as inversion of the order of two digits; secondly the repetition of a digit probably often when it has been difficult to obtain a view of the whole number; and thirdly anticipation. Bands of two diameters, "E" diameter and "H" diameter were used on Red-billed Gulls. All E bands were pre-fixed with E and most H bands with H. Some H bands had only a number. Now these bands could be recognised apart at a glance; further often those of different years of the same size could be recognised, so