

LETTERS

APROPOS THE SOCIETY'S JOURNAL &c.

The Editor,
Sir,

In recent issues of *Notornis* the end pages have, in their Reviews, "From the Editor's Desk," Notes and News, "About Our Authors," and Letters to the Editor, provided some much needed lighter and informative alternative to the generally rather profound papers and provoked much lively discussion. Such matters are frequently kept out of the pages of scientific journals and published as separate newsletters (*vide* RAOU Newsletter, Royal Society of NZ Newsletter). This is a retrograde step divorcing ornithologists from ornithology and making something else to file and catalogue, a librarian's nightmare. I hope you will resist the temptation to follow suit.

Two matters in the September issue are to my mind worthy of comment. First the statement of the Council on its attitude towards conservation ("From the Secretary" — *Notornis* 20 (3): 288-289); that it will associate itself with and support conservation bodies while not normally taking independent action. This is eminently sensible: the Society should not get distracted from its main objects. It was formed primarily to study living birds in their natural state and used not to be concerned with (in other than an informative capacity) the protection or destruction of birds or their habitats, which are the function of specialist bodies. The restriction has however been dropped from the present constitution and therefore may not easily be debated again because the Annual General Meeting has now no power to direct the Council. It is thus right that the Council's recent decision should be promptly reported to members and that you should allow members the opportunity of publicly supporting it. I congratulate you on providing this opportunity in the columns of *Notornis*.

I am however devastated to learn (p. 299) that you have allowed yourself to be persuaded by "several long-standing members" to discontinue the feature "About our Authors." May I remind you that you are not subject to direction of the Council and that it is usual for ornithological journals to publish obituaries? But why should members learn of the interests and achievements of their fellow members only after their deaths?

J. M. CUNNINGHAM

("another long-standing member")

"Illawarra,"
5 Kotari Road,
Days Bay,
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